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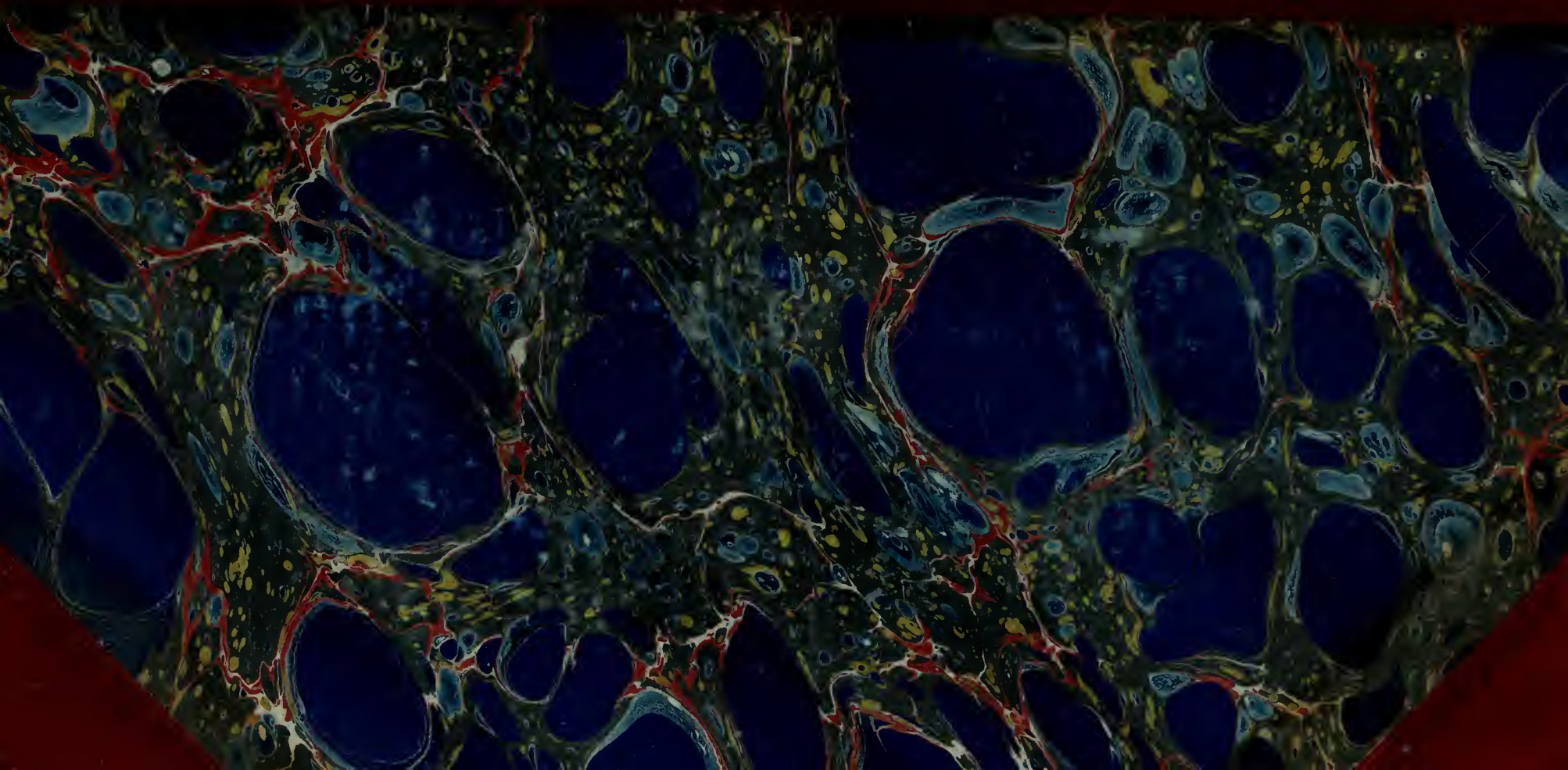

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. R. AND E. TAYLOR.

MISS COMBERMERE.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE

ARGOSY.

EDITED BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

VOLUME XXVII.

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THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER I.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"I AM afraid there is no help for it," said Sir Marcus, stirring his tea. His daughter looked at him from behind her urn with a face full of consternation; for when Sir Marcus Combermere was afraid of anything, or anybody, the case must be serious. As the spoon moved slowly in his cup, she could see he was weighing the subject again, perhaps out of compassion for her look; but with no more favourable result than the repeated remark, as he broke the shell of his egg, "I am afraid it cannot be helped, my dear."

"If you cannot help it, or help me, my dear father, there is no more to be said," said Miss Combermere, somewhat petulantly.

"I am glad of it, my love," said he; "that is always an advantage."

"I don't think it is," argued the young lady: "one must speak sometimes, especially of what one hates."

"Indeed? The necessity had not occurred to me. Let me cut you a slice of ham, or some of the pie. You are eating no breakfast."

And according to his invariable custom, reversing the ordinary rule, he waited upon his daughter with the assiduous courtesy which in some houses is reserved for guests. Gladly as she would have served both him and herself, she knew better than to object to his attentions, having once been put down with the remark, "If no one else knows what is due to my daughter, *I* do."

All his pressing, however, could not give her back the appetite which the post-bag had taken away. Sir Marcus was fain to desist,

and return to his own substantial share of the duty before him—a duty he always steadily performed. Having worked his way through the solids of flesh and fowl on the sideboard to the lighter elements of cream and preserve on the table, he pushed away his plate with a gentle sigh of satisfaction.

"Never mind, Kitty," he said, as he dexterously raised the noble log that crackled in the grate, so as to bring out a shower of sparks and a jet of bright flame; "if acid and alkali never had a chance of combining, we should lose many a pleasant drink—not to say, wholesome medicine. Let them fizz as nature points out; it is but froth, after all; and we are not responsible for the laws of chemistry."

"No more are we for sulphur and saltpetre," said the unconvinced Kate; "but that is poor comfort when a powder magazine blows up. However, it is your affair, father, not mine."

"I thought my affairs were yours, my dear, and yours mine. We agreed on that point only yesterday——"

"I know we did. And how good you are!—and I am horridly cross and unreasonable this morning—but—but you do not know half the worry that this will bring upon me."

"Neither do you, for that matter, so why fret over it beforehand? Tell me honestly: can you suggest any decent way of escape from our dilemma?"

She was obliged to own she could not, which, in her opinion, made it all the worse. He stirred the fire again, and walked out of the room, repeating a couplet of which he was rather fond:

> "Two things will not fret you, if you're a wise man—
> The thing you can't help, and the thing that you can."

Now, in Kate Combermere's state of mind at that moment, there was something peculiarly distasteful in this philosophy. It was the peculiar aggravation of things you couldn't help that you had to pretend you could if you pleased—that you were doing that of your own free will which you would give anything to escape. And of this nature was her trial just now, in being obliged to prepare a welcome for guests whom she wished a hundred miles off.

"I don't want to slander myself," was her mental soliloquy—people really do soliloquise in silence much oftener than is supposed—"I am not inhospitable—I like to give a warm welcome when it comes from my heart, and not only to those I particularly care for, but to any who enjoy it when it is given. I have my faults—some people think I have a good many, and point them out when they might as well leave them alone. But I will not accuse myself unjustly; and I do maintain it is not laziness, or selfwill, that is the matter with me now—only honest dislike to a disagreeable thing; and the more I think of it, the worse it seems!"

She took up the letter which had caused the discussion; and while

the old manservant was removing the breakfast things, stood, contrary to her wont, musing over the fire.

The misfortune which had befallen her was not very severe—had it been, she might have borne it better; but (as she was accustomed to argue) a grain of sand is not much in itself, yet in its wrong place —the corner of your right eye, for instance—it can give you a considerable amount of trouble. And her grain of sand, on that cold January morning, was the announcement that some visitors would arrive in the course of the day, from whom she had fondly believed herself safe for a twelvemonth, at least. They had been invited, cordially invited, and had declined the invitation, being engaged elsewhere; and others had been asked in their stead, who were to arrive that afternoon. And now had come a letter to say that scarlet-fever prevented their paying one of their promised visits; so, as they should be passing so near, they would drop in on their old friend Sir Marcus, and take their chance of a welcome. There was no time for any answer, and it was evidently considered unnecessary.

As far as Sir Marcus was concerned it was so, for Mr. and Mrs. Bourne were old friends, and to such his house was always open; but they were not on quite such friendly terms with the other guests whom they would meet; and his daughter's arrangements had been made with a special regard to the circumstance. Hence her discomfiture. Mr. and Mrs. Bourne could be endured as a duty, she might say, almost with cheerfulness; but she could not think cheerfully of the prospect before her—that of having to keep the peace between people who never could agree. It was not that they quarrelled—that could be understood and provided for; but they were sure to wrangle; and if there was anything Kate detested it was a war of words. Of course her father treated it lightly, because they were never so bad when he was by—no one ever was. It was not only impossible to quarrel with Sir Marcus, but it was difficult to be in a comfortably bad temper when his eye rested upon you: there was something in it that made the ugly thing look uglier than even your own feelings could bear. But he was not always present, and for several hours of the day the mistress of the house might have to encounter that which shunned his notice; and anything would have been hailed as a relief that offered her a chance of escape.

"The wind is very cold, Stephens," she remarked to the old butler, who was a standing oracle on the subject of weather; "it feels to me like snow."

"I think we shall have snow very soon, ma'am," said Stephens, glancing at the hills, at that moment veiled in mist.

"Will it be a heavy fall, do you think?"

"Very likely, ma'am. They have had one already in the Highlands."

"If it would only come down at once, and keep them all away!" sighed Kate to herself, and she too gazed at the grand old hills,

their heads clothed in mist, their waists fringed with leafless woods, and ornamented with silver threads of falling water—a landscape which seldom failed to give her delight, but which at that moment she could gladly have seen blotted out by the heaviest snow storm that nature had in store.

Grand as was the situation of the house, in one of the many lovely spots with which Westmoreland abounds, it was nothing more in itself than a comfortable modern mansion, built by a Liverpool merchant, whose family had originally come from the neighbourhood, and whose vision of happiness had always been to retire thither when his day's work was over. His day's work only ending with his life, the house passed to his nephew, Sir Marcus Combermere, at the time one of the most popular surgeons in London. That he could ever enjoy quiet and country air, while the demand for his services was far beyond the possibility of supply, was generally believed to be most unlikely; and after the fashion of unlikely things, it took place when least expected. The severe strain on the famous surgeon's strength had told both on his health and sight; and having made a competency on which he could retire, he yielded to the advice of friends and the entreaties of his only daughter, and gave up the work he loved. For the last six years they had lived at the Court, as the house was called, and he had become nearly as popular in the country as he had been in the metropolis. As his daughter knew to her cost: anyone who wanted what nobody else could give, came as a matter of course to Sir Marcus, and got it out of him—or if that were impossible, its equivalent. Above all his counsel was sought, even if not always followed; and the general belief in his wisdom and kindness placed him higher in public estimation than many a richer and more powerful man.

Such being the case, and retirement having sufficiently restored his health to enable him to enjoy life, in his daughter's company, as he had never done before, severe judges might say she was decidedly ungrateful for grumbling, even to herself, about a visitor or two more or less. A few years before, she would have been thankful to be told she should see him receiving any at all.

She contrived to maintain a show of good humour, both while giving the necessary orders for the reception of the expected guests, and when she met her father at luncheon to report that all was ready. Whether he read through her smiles was another question; at any rate, he appreciated the effort, and settled in his own mind to keep his eye on his good friends when they did arrive, that they might not worry her more than was absolutely necessary.

"I shall go and meet Mrs. Archdale myself, Kitty," he said, as he glanced at the clock, "her train is due about three. Tell them to put plenty of wraps in the carriage—that poor boy of hers must not get a chill. Mind he has a good fire in his bedroom."

"My dear father, I have ordered good fires in all the bedrooms;

and my only wish is that they should find them so comfortable as to make them stay in them altogether!"

"Take care, Kitty; such wishes sometimes meet with unexpected fulfilment. The Bournes are coming straight from scarlet-fever, remember."

"Mention that to Mrs. Archdale, papa, and perhaps she will prefer going further on. But no," she continued to herself, as he left the room, shaking his head at her, "such an opportunity of getting the first advice in the county might be too strong a temptation."

She tried to read—she tried to play—but as nothing would answer, had just seated herself to her davenport, beginning a letter to a confidential friend in London who enjoyed the privilege of being her safety-valve, when a step in the hall and a voice at the door, recognised at the same instant by herself and her terrier, changed the whole aspect of affairs without and within.

"Lewis!" she exclaimed, springing from her seat with extended hand of welcome, "who would have thought of seeing you? Where have you come from?"

"You may well ask, considering the mess I am in," said the newcomer, glancing down at his bespattered clothes, without attempting to approach. "Rehearsing for the Alpine Club is a most profitable exercise—you learn geology, botany, and hydropathy, all at once. You wouldn't suppose to look at me how respectable I was when I started this morning to find my own way across the hills; but peat moss and quagmire are charmed to catch the schoolmaster abroad and shove him down to the bottom of the class. Hallo, Dandie! you had better not come too near, or you will have to share my bath. I need not ask how *you* are, you lucky little beggar," as the dog, regardless alike of present mud, and future soap-suds, nearly devoured him with caresses; "I know who spoils you. He is getting too fat, Kate. I knew he would."

"Then you must give him exercise, for his requirements are beyond me."

"Can you really take me in? I met Sir Marcus, and he said I might ask you, but he was not sure."

"Take you in? Of course I can. No one has bespoken your room, luckily. Where are your goods—or have you none?"

"My knapsack is in the hands of Stephens, who has also undertaken to find me anything it does not contain. I didn't tell him it was half full of stones, for fear of hurting his feelings; but the fact is, some too seductive specimens led me astray—hence these splashes. No, Kate, I must not ruin your carpet, and be marked down in the black-books of the whole of the domestic establishment for evermore. I have a character to support now."

She let him do as he pleased, and while he is getting rid of the peat, and she is making arrangements for his comfort, in a very different mood from that of the morning, we may intrude a few

words of explanation. Lewis Frankland was the son of an Indian judge; and as his holidays had always been spent at the house of his father's friend, Sir Marcus, he had grown up on fraternal terms of intimacy with Kate Combermere. His father's death, just as he was leaving Westminster, revealed the fact that he must work for his living, the judge's debts being nearly enough to absorb his whole inheritance. The lad had fortunately won a scholarship, and went to college determined to make his way to independence, succeeding so well that he was seldom without pupils, and his ability as a tutor had recently led to his obtaining the post of assistant master in a large north country school about ten miles from the Court. His intercourse with his friends, which had been much interrupted, was thus renewed to their mutual satisfaction; and it was a decided disappointment when he wrote that he could not be with them at Christmas, having undertaken to "coach" an unlucky candidate for a Civil Service examination. The candidate had been taken ill, and Lewis finding himself free, started at once for his old friend's house, where we have seen how he was welcomed.

In a wonderfully short time he was sitting down to a good luncheon, Kate carving and Stephens watching over his plate with a zeal that, as he said, would have taken away the breath of anybody but a schoolmaster. To carve for twenty boys, and keep up with them at the same time, brought out a man's powers, he could tell them.

"Mind how you set me carving for you by-and-by, Kate, or your joints will disappear like snow-wreaths in sun. I shall be cutting everything up that is set before me, if you don't take care."

"If you would only make the guests disappear as fast, I would forgive you the joints."

"You alarm me, Kate. I thought of sleeping here to-night, but if such a formidable party is expected, I had better think twice about it. Besides, I have no dress coat, you know—unless Stephens can lend me one."

Stephens turned from the fire he was replenishing, to observe with a respectful smile, that the cart was just going down to the station for luggage, if Mr. Frankland liked to send a telegram.

"To be sure! well thought of!" cried Kate, flying for pen and paper, and placing them before the guest. "Tell them to send all you will want for a week. They will know what that means."

"But suppose Sir Marcus forgets to ask me?"

"Then you must forget you have not been asked. Be quick, or the cart will be gone."

Thus urged, Lewis wrote in haste, "Shall stay a week, send togs at once," addressed it to his housekeeper, and gave it to Stephens.

"A cool proceeding this, I must say," he observed, rubbing his hands, as he returned to Miss Combermere.

"My dear Lewis, if you knew the fever I was in before you came,

you would take credit for working my cure. I am ready now to receive Mrs. Archdale, which I certainly was not an hour ago."

"Mrs. Archdale? I have not seen her for years, and I used to be horribly afraid of her in the golden days of my innocence. She had a peculiar trick of asking disagreeable questions at awkward moments, I remember. I hope she is cured of that."

"On the contrary, she has greater skill in the art than ever. Like the use of the Esquimaux whip, it requires both knack and practice; and, unless I am much mistaken, we shall see something of it while she is here. Do you remember her son?"

"Ernest? I met him once just before he got his commission. I heard he was on sick leave; is it so?"

"Oh, yes; pages and pages have I read about his goings and comings, as if nobody had ever had a trouble besides herself. But he really is a nice fellow; he met with an accident in Ireland, a fall, I believe, and has been suffering ever since. It is not his fault that he is made into an idol."

"Fault, indeed! I wish I knew anyone who would make an idol of *me*. I have never yet got further than Mumbo Jumbo. What is that noise? They can't be come already? I had heaps of things to say to you."

"They must wait then, for in sober sadness here they come."

And Kate, with a brightness in her smile which it certainly had not worn in the morning, hastened to receive her guests in the hall. Her father's quick eye detected the change in a moment, and her hospitable cordiality became her well; its effect was not thrown away on Mrs. Archdale, as she took care Sir Marcus should perceive. There was just enough compliment and admiration in her first greeting to make Kate aware she was looking well, without causing her any embarrassment; and before they had reached the drawing-room, the visitor had contrived to say and look as many pleasant things as she had made steps in the hall, supplying all that her son did not say, though her eyes turned towards him several times as if in expectation. Beyond the correct greeting at first, Ernest Archdale attempted nothing but to accomplish unassisted the journey from the carriage to an easy chair, into which he subsided as if he would gladly have disappeared altogether. Kate, shocked to see how pale and thin he was, and that he could just crawl with the help of his cane, would have offered sympathy and services on the spot; but an expressive glance from his mother checked the impulse, and she carried off her confusion by attending to the tea, which their cold journey made acceptable to all. Even Sir Marcus, contrary to his conscience as he said, yielded to the temptation, hoping that his dinner would not find out what he had done.

"And how about Lewis, Kate?" he asked, as he helped himself to cream and sugar; "have you persuaded him to stay one night, at any rate?"

Kate believed she had, with a little pressing.

"Well, as he can give us no more we must be grateful for that, and speed the parting guest, who has better amusement elsewhere. But it is a pity he will miss the school treat: anything in that line must be a pleasure to him."

"What school treat, father?"

"That I must ask you, my dear. A telegram came to the office, which old Brooks read aloud. 'Shall stay here a week—send toys at once'—so I conclude there must be a sudden demand for Noah's arks and ninepins."

"Toys?" shouted Lewis in dismay, nearly dropping the plate he was handing to Mrs. Archdale. "Did the message go, sir?"

"I imagine so. Have you any special interest in the matter, apart from the great question of national education?"

"I should rather think I had. I don't see my way to dressing for dinner in Noah's arks and ninepins. I must send another message."

"Dressing for dinner? Are we to wait dinner then, till this cheerful commission is executed?"

"No, sir; but the fact is ——"

"Was the message yours? That is the essential point."

"Yes, sir, we thought—I meant—that ——"

"Stephens," said Sir Marcus, turning to that functionary, who had just brought in the candles, "the dog-cart will not be wanted for Mr. Frankland to-morrow. He is good enough to spare us some of his vacation; and when his toys arrive, we can borrow a waggon from the farm."

"But, Sir Marcus, I never said a word about toys. My old housekeeper will think I have gone mad. I must run down to the station and set all straight."

"To tell you the truth, I took the liberty of disputing the point with Brooks, and suggesting a more classical reading of the word, as akin to the toga of manhood rather than the pinafore of youth. Being a thoroughly trustworthy servant, he allowed me to send the message my own way."

"Indeed, sir? And what was it at last?"

"'Shall stay three weeks at least. Sends togs accordingly.' When young fellows take liberties in my house, Mrs. Archdale, I generally pay them in kind. You need not be afraid of my friend Bourne—I shall keep my eye upon him, as well as Master Ernest here, whom I do not trust in the least."

"You are not expecting Mr. Bourne?" said Mrs. Archdale, breathlessly.

"Expecting him? Why no, I cannot say we are—for there he comes."

And, as Sir Marcus spoke, the door bell rang.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

So dismayed was the expression of Mrs. Archdale's face, that Kate, instead of following her father into the hall, stopped short to apologise and explain—which brought Ernest unexpectedly upon his feet.

"Don't you know my mother by this time, Miss Combermere? She would never see anybody if we allowed her to have her own way; and I, for one, protest against that. I have not seen Mr. Bourne since he used to row me at chess. Does he still lose his temper five times a day?"

"Lose his temper?" murmured Mrs. Archdale, "it would be a happy thing if he did—and never found it again. My dear Kate, do not mind me—I have no right to say a word—you are all kindness, I am sure. Go and receive Mrs. Bourne; I promise you not to let out that I had hoped to have you all to myself."

Here Lewis put his head in. "How many ladies did you expect, Kate?"

"One—and her maid, of course. Why, Lewis?"

For Lewis's face meant mischief. Glancing beyond it, she seemed to see in the dusk quite a crowd of bonnets, multiplied as they were by the slight confusion of her senses. Before she had time to speak, her hands were seized and shaken again and again, and a panting voice endeavoured to tell a long story in a few seconds, with what success may be imagined:

"My dear child—so good your kind father always is—scarlet fever, you know—awfully catching—months before infection is over—I couldn't let them stay—it was all my doing. Miss Medlicott, my dear—you remember her, of course—always such a sufferer—never without pain for a moment—couldn't think of giving trouble—told her it would be such a pleasure—house full of young children—greatest risk, and no one to see after her comforts. And, charming girl, Cecilia Wilmot—Mr. Bourne's ward, you know—never had anything in her life—only conceive if she caught it—I had to be quite positive to make her come—and if you don't press her she won't stay—girls are so self-willed, but the most charming companion. My dear, you were always so sweet tempered, I know you'll excuse the liberty."

By this time, Kate had had time to understand what had befallen her, and to recover her presence of mind. Under the circumstances, she thought, the larger the party the better, so her response was as cordial as hospitality required. Any friends of Mrs. Bourne's were welcome, of course; and, extricating herself from the anxious lady's grasp, she went forward to greet the new arrivals, whom Sir Marcus was welcoming already as if their coming was the greatest favour in the world. He knew Miss Medlicott of old—he knew Miss Wilmot's

family—it was just like the prudent foresight of his old friend Mrs. Bourne, the best nurse he had ever come across, even though he hoped it had only been a chance of infection, nothing more.

"Nothing of the sort," growled Mr. Bourne, "a child in bed for half a day—that was all; only some people are never happy except they can be in a fuss."

"My dear Nicholas——" began his wife.

"My dear Betty, if you go on talking till this day twelvemonth, you will not persuade me that there was anything to make you or any reasonable creature uneasy. You have put Miss Kate, there, to great inconvenience, and taken a great liberty; but that is your affair, not mine."

Of course nobody would admit this for a moment; Kate, privately agreeing with him, being the most vehement in contradiction. Inconvenience? there was nothing of the sort; the only regret she felt was that the ladies would not find their fires lighted yet; but that would soon be remedied. She would have carried them off to the drawing-room meanwhile, but Mrs. Bourne's anxiety about Miss Medlicott could only be satisfied by taking her to the comfortable apartment prepared for herself, where she was installed on the sofa, and implored to say what kind of refreshment she would prefer.

To do the young lady justice, she seemed equally ready to take any thing and everything that was offered; but Kate began to think it would end in her having nothing at all, for Mrs. Bourne was one of those well-meaning people who are apt, whatever you are going to do, to say you would be better if you did something else; and as fast as Miss Medlicott accepted one proposal, found some reason for substituting another.

"A cup of tea, dear? Yes—but, perhaps, coffee—more strengthening you know—immense nourishment in coffee—you won't mind, Kate, my dear? Or stay, by the way, it might be heating—a little weak sherry and water, with some dry toast—my mother always said that was the most reviving—so much obliged, dear child! I know how good—or if you *had* a little soup ready—better than stimulant, your good father used to say—and she may then get a little sleep. But suppose it should spoil her dinner, and she with an appetite so small, you know—what do you say to a glass of port wine, and the least morsel of seed cake? You would?—but then something hot might save you from a chill. I really think, after all, a little sal volatile might be safest, and then perfect quiet till dressing time—don't you think so, Kate, my love?"

Kate had no objection, if Miss Medlicott preferred such light refreshment, but this Miss Medlicott roused herself to explain distinctly, she did not; and Miss Combermere, half from compassion, half from impatience, cut the matter short by ordering up wine and tea and cake, so as to give the invalid a chance of tasting something

she liked. Leaving the friends to settle the details as they pleased, she turned her attention on the younger stranger, whom she had comparatively overlooked, but who accepted her apologies with perfect good-humour, and supreme indifference towards the sufferings of Miss Medlicott.

"It is my private opinion, Miss Combermere," Miss Wilmot said, as Kate ushered her into her room, "that she is as well as you or I, but she likes to be made the first object of consideration, and Mrs. Bourne enjoys having someone to pet and moan over. She would do it with me if I would let her, but I hate illness and nursing and everything connected with them. Half the people who give so much trouble might be quite well if they were not pitied and petted; and I make a point of never pitying anybody."

"Are you not afraid of needing pity yourself, some day?"

"There is nothing I should hate so much. At this present moment I feel that I am only to be congratulated. What a charming place this is—how fond you must be of it!"

"I have grown fond of it now, but for most of my life my heart was in smoky old London."

"Oh, London is a place unlike any other. You ought to have lived in a country town to make you appreciate such a home as this. And perhaps I may add, though it sounds very wrong and ungrateful, that you ought to have been so tired of everybody about you, that you would have thought a balloon a pleasant change!"

"Well, I have not been troubled in that way yet; there is no saying what I may come to," said Kate, thinking to herself that she seemed likely to make a beginning at once. Her young guest nodded her head with an arch look of mischief, as if she read the unspoken thought; then turning to the glass, removed her hat, and arranged her pretty hair.

"You have visitors already in the house, have you not?" she asked, in as indifferent a tone as she could command.

Kate explained briefly, adding that it was rather unfortunate that Miss Wilmot had such a dislike to invalids.

"But Mrs. Archdale is not an invalid?"

"No; but her son looks very ill."

"Does he, indeed? How charmed he must be, for he always tried to look interesting, and used to fail signally. I am sure he puts it on to attract attention. You have no idea what young men will do sometimes to make you think about them—they are more amusing in their affectations than any girls."

"I was not aware you knew Ernest Archdale."

"Well, we met in Ireland, when his regiment was there. I have not seen him for nearly a year, so we have had plenty of time to forget each other's existence. I should not wonder if he pretends not to know who I am."

Did she mean what she said? If so, why was the light dancing

in her eyes, and the colour glowing on her cheeks, as she moved to leave her room, listening so eagerly to the sound of the billiard-balls in the library that Miss Combermere had no option but to conduct her thither. Certainly, as she opened the door and let the young lady pass, it struck Kate that she had never seen a prettier glow of pleasure on a girlish face. A visit to quiet people like themselves could not be such a treat, even in anticipation. Was there some other attraction to account for this bright flush of impatience?

The library was well warmed and lighted, Sir Marcus being probably aware that to win a rubber at his favourite game would be the best emollient Mr. Bourne's temper could receive. Lewis was marking for his elders, and Ernest, from the depths of an easy chair, was watching the strokes with so much apparent interest, that he did not turn his head till the ladies were close to him. Then he rose, and greeted Miss Wilmot with the ease of old acquaintance, talked of the weather and the scenery, and their mutual friends in Ireland; but, even while she was expressing pleasure at meeting him again, allowed his eyes to wander back to the table. The conjecture Miss Combermere had formed would have been dispelled at once, but for the change in Cecilia's face, where all the young lady's presence of mind could not conceal an amount of consternation not entirely due to his altered looks. The pleasure of meeting, as far as Kate could see, had been all on one side, and was not likely to last long.

She approached the table, and left them together. Ernest Archdale showed no impatience to use the opportunity. After placing a seat for Miss Wilmot, he remained leaning against the easy chair, quietly ignoring all invitations to resume it.

"Indeed," she persisted, in rather a hesitating manner, "you had much better rest while you can. I am sorry to see you are not so strong as you used to be."

"Thanks," he replied, with as much dryness as courtesy permitted; "it is my own fault, I believe. A man buys his experience sooner or later, and mine has come sooner than usual."

"Have you had good advice?"

"More than I can well follow. It is quite a study of character to see those two play. Every stroke shows individuality."

"I daresay, but I am not studying characters just now; I am thinking of health. How long have you been like this? I had no idea of it."

"Well played, Mr. Bourne! That turns the tables completely. I beg your pardon, Miss Wilmot—you were asking——?"

"Never mind, as you do not care to listen."

Her cheeks were burning now with mortification, and she very nearly walked away. But after a short struggle turned to him with an appealing look into his face—such a look as she had never known to fail—as she half whispered the question, "Do you suffer much pain?"

He laughed gently. "Not more than a fellow must expect who attempts what he cannot do, and has to bear the effects of his own clumsiness. But one gets used to it in time."

"Used to it? The longer pain lasts, the worse it must be."

"I hope you may never have to try the experiment; you would find it as I say. Besides, pain is a very good doctor for other complaints, if that is an advantage."

"Then is there nothing to be done? Can *I* do anything?"

The voice was almost imploring: but it failed to awaken a response. He only shook his head, as he observed that the one serviceable remedy was beyond her power to offer. Something brought back the brightness to her smile, as she begged him to try, at any rate, whether she might not be cleverer than he supposed.

"I have perfect faith in your abilities, Miss Wilmot, and admire them; but even you cannot give me back a year of my life."

"Ah!" she drew a deep breath. "Is the mischief then quite irreparable?"

"As to that, most things may be patched, somehow; but they are never again what they were. As you found when you tried to mend Mrs. Bourne's precious china."

"To think of your taunting me with that! I can tell you this in confidence, that I have mended some so cleverly she has never perceived it had been broken. Do you wish to know the secret? Never wait till the edges get rubbed—join the pieces together as tightly and as soon as possible."

He made no answer, and stood looking straight before him, though it may be doubted whether he saw any more of the game. She, on the other hand, felt she had gone as far as she dared, and the burning tears which must not fall were beginning to dim her sight. It was almost a relief, notwithstanding the pain of disappointment, when Mrs. Archdale appeared to call her son away: some letters had to be sent off by post: and perhaps she flattered herself that her chagrin at failure had escaped his notice. He certainly left the library without showing any signs of observing it.

"Poor young fellow!" observed Sir Marcus, as the door closed behind the mother and son. "I daresay you find him altered, Miss Wilmot?"

"Very much," she replied, with involuntary emphasis.

Mr. Bourne looked sharply round. "Where did you know him, Cecilia?"

"In Ireland; his regiment was quartered near my cousin's, you remember, and he rode in a steeplechase that the officers got up, and had a fall. But I had no idea it had been so bad a one."

"Neither had he at the time," said Sir Marcus, "and the consequence was he took no precautions. The truth is, he ought never to have ridden that race at all, for his mother, as he knew, disapproved of the amusement; and the horse was a vicious one, quite unfit to be

mounted. It kicked him when he was down, and I suspect that is the secret of the mischief."

"To be sure; I remember now," said Mr. Bourne, "and that it was out of sheer bravado he rode at all—just to show the other idiots that he was not tied to his mother's apron-string. If mothers will be foolish enough to dictate to young fellows of that age, they must take the consequence; but that good lady never had a grain of common sense in her life. Her hobby will give her a worse downcome than Cairngorm gave poor Ernest."

"It really was Cairngorm's doing—not his own fault?" asked Miss Wilmot, hurriedly.

"Nay, it was the fault of those who drove him to ride the brute. He is a plucky young fellow, and did his best, no doubt. Sir Marcus, I think that makes the rubber; but you have only trifled with me."

"Convince me of that by all means, for the sake of my credit," said Sir Marcus, exulting inwardly over his own defeat, for his opponent's brow was radiant with self-complacency, and there was a chance of a peaceful dinner-hour.

"Kitty, my love," he said, a little later, when she paid him a hasty visit in his dressing-room, by way of solace amidst her labours; "I used to think nothing could equal the self-devotion of Torquil of the Oak, but mine to-day has beaten his. I have let old Bourne beat *me* and believe it was his own doing—and all to make him amiable for the evening. If you do as much by Miss Medlicott and Miss Wilmot, we shall come off with flying colours."

"Indeed, I have done all I could for both. Miss Medlicott has had three different kinds of refreshment since she arrived, and Lewis has been devoting himself to amuse Miss Wilmot, so that they are likely to be the best of friends."

"Lewis, eh? Well, he is able to take care of himself; or if not, it is time he knew how. She is a pretty little creature, *but*—my dear, I shall be late for dinner, and that will be fatal."

"One minute more, father; do explain about Miss Medlicott's case. Is it true that she puzzles all the doctors?"

"I daresay it is, for she is cleverer than most of them."

"Clever?"

"Yes. A man thinks himself lucky if he can make a living out of fifty patients, and she does it easily on one."

The oracle was ambiguous; but there was no time for explanation, and Kate had to make the most of both hints. That "but" would return more than once, even while she acknowledged the value of Cecilia's liveliness in helping them through the dreaded dinner-hour. The young lady's toilette seemed to have restored her spirits, for she reappeared in the drawing-room in most becoming attire and sparkling smiles, almost dazzling to Lewis, who, thinking her depressed, had prepared himself for her special entertainment.

He speedily found himself drawn into that kind of conversation that, between jest and earnest, becomes intimacy before you are aware; and their good-humour so infected the others that Mrs. Archdale, after listening with an occasional smile of amusement, turned to compliment Mr. Bourne on his ward's attractions and amiability.

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, with rather less gruffness than usual; "she is like most young girls—charming enough when they are pleased. Give them their own way, and they won't trouble you to show them yours."

"They do not always know what their own way is," said she gently.

"You think not, ma'am? You have not had so much to do with them as I have. I don't blame them, remember; they cannot help being what all women are."

"Take care," said the lady, still preserving the gracious manner with which she had armed herself for the evening; "if you open fire upon us poor women, I shall fall back on those strong reserves, Mrs. Bourne and Miss Medlicott—not to mention our dear young hostess—to support the cause of the sex."

"And if you can prove to me, ma'am, that any one of these ladies does not know her own way and try to get it, I'll confess I am beaten."

"You are too polite to include *me*, then."

"Not exactly, ma'am. You think you have no will but that young gentleman's; yet I doubt your being contented to let him choose for himself."

"Mr. Bourne, I have but one object in living at all, and that is his happiness."

"I quite believe it, ma'am; but you would like to have a hand in cutting it out."

"As you would in Miss Wilmot's case, were she your daughter."

"Perhaps I might; but her case would be rather different then. A child of mine, if I approved her choice, would be independent of other people's money; but my young friend there, whose fortune will hardly keep her straight with her dressmaker, cannot afford to marry anyone but a rich man."

"Indeed? Then she is not as amply endowed by fortune as by nature?"

"Nature has so arranged it that she always wants to spend twice as much as she has to spend. Luckily for her, I don't like that sort of thing, Mrs. Archdale."

"It is lucky for her, indeed, to have a kind guardian and adviser, who can protect her from her own mistakes," said the lady, in a tone of humility and sadness, that caused him some surprise. "Yes, Mr. Bourne," she added, as he looked at her with a relaxing of his heavy brows, "often and often have I thought over some of your hints, rather roughly given at the time, but always sound; had I only taken them sooner they might have saved me hours of anxiety and

vexation. Indeed, whenever I have escaped a difficulty, it has generally been from carrying out a suggestion of yours."

He could not suppress a smile of satisfaction as he muttered, "Very glad, ma'am, very glad, I'm sure," but she had touched him on his vulnerable point, and he drew his chair a little closer, for the convenience of more confidential talk than he had ever bestowed on her before. What it was all about, nobody knew but themselves. Miss Combermere only saw how amicably they went together into the dining-room; and how, through the greater part of the meal, he seemed to be laying down the law, and Mrs. Archdale to be gathering it up. It looked too good to last, but while it lasted was an indescribable relief.

It left her free to enjoy Ernest Archdale's conversation, and to discover that since his illness he had become a devourer of books, new and old, and could meet her in discussing all her favourite authors. Kate saw that he had a suppressed amount of enthusiasm in his nature which education or circumstances had hindered him from displaying—perhaps from finding out; but which like other hidden forces, would make itself a vent some day. Would it be given to Cecilia Wilmot to light up that smouldering fire? and if so, would it be for good or for evil? Who could say? The question had scarcely crossed her mind, before interruption came from the further end of the table, in a somewhat piteous appeal from Mrs. Bourne.

"My dear Cecilia—you can't possibly think—walking for a whole day—sitting down on damp stones—spoiling everything you have on—catching your death of cold! My dear Sir Marcus, your authority—you couldn't allow such an imprudent—Nicholas, my love, you agree with me, don't you?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, Betty," answered her husband, not very well pleased by the interruption, "but I agree with you, of course. Do I ever do otherwise?"

"There, my dear, you hear what Mr. Bourne says; and after that —Oh, Mr. Frankland! I am sure, if you try, you can find some safer —such a precious charge, and so delicate! Yes, you are, my love, though you shake your head. I heard you cough twice while you were dressing—do take warning in time—if you just look at others——"

"Say no more, ma'am," returned the young lady, in a voice that was a demure imitation of Mrs. Bourne's. "You hear what is threatened us, Mr. Frankland."

"You are quite right to be on your guard, Miss Wilmot," said Sir Marcus, "when you are listening to that gentleman. He has a good, sensible head of his own, and two very long, and very foolish legs; and his life is made up of a struggle between the parties. Sometimes the legs are comparatively nowhere, and the head makes the running; but when once the vacation begins, be the weather what it may, they seize their revenge: and if Kate had not taken pity upon him, where

his head would have been to-night is more than I can tell you, or he either."

Lewis protested vehemently ; a man would very soon have enough of hill-climbing, if his head did not help his legs. There was no refreshment to the overtasked brain like mountain ascents, as many scientific men could bear witness; but hills like Comberhoe, and its neighbours, were within anybody's reach; and if Miss Wilmot were in earnest, and they did but get a fine day, he would undertake to guide her up and down without the ghost of a difficulty, provided he might inspect her boots, and see her duly equipped to face the cold. Of course, it was best in summer, but there was a charm in a winter expedition which no one could enter into but those who tried it—an assertion with which most of the party agreed. Cecilia declared that as she had never climbed anything but a hayrick in her life, an ascent of Comberhoe would more than realise her wildest dreams. There was nothing more captivating to her fancy than expeditions full of hardships and dangers ; to reach some almost impossible point without being at all sure of coming down again.

"But if you please, Miss Wilmot," said Sir Marcus, "we would rather be sure, as far as human wisdom can, that you *will* come down again ; and to relieve Mrs. Bourne's fears at once, I may as well observe that I see very little chance of your losing yourself on Comberhoe to-morrow. It has begun to snow already, and I believe we shall have a heavy fall."

In point of fact, though the inmates of the Court had been too well employed to notice the weather, it had changed considerably for the worse during the last few hours ; and when the ladies moved out of the dining-room, the roaring of the wind in the chimneys reminded them of the different atmosphere outside from that they enjoyed within. A glimpse between the thick curtains speedily convinced Cecilia that her host was in the right. Adventures, as she remarked, would have to be sought in Arctic costume—a sacrifice of appearances for which she was not quite prepared.

"I have not Mr. Frankland's heroic disregard of the toilette. He seems perfectly indifferent about the arrival of his luggage, and not at all sure that it will ever be sent."

"It would take a great deal more to put him out of temper," said Kate, smiling, "even if his portmanteau did arrive full of Noah's arks and ninepins."

"We may be very glad if it does," said Mrs. Archdale, who had in turn been observing the weather. "It looks very like our being all snowed up together, and if driven to extremity for amusement the ninepins may be useful."

The idea of being snowed up sounded positively delightful to Miss Wilmot, and she lost no time in imparting the news to Mrs. Bourne, at that moment busily engaged in making Miss Medlicott comfortable on the sofa close to the fire. The blank consternation with which they

both listened beguiled her into dilating on the probable consequences —the stoppage of communication, scarcity of provisions, want of fuel, necessity of taking violent exercise, and so forth, till Miss Medlicott was almost in tears, and Mrs. Bourne in despair. She appealed to Kate as to whether dear Sir Marcus would ever allow anything of the kind; and Kate, though she could not answer for the snow, undertook that there should be no more discomfort indoors than was implied by not being able to go out. Here was her father himself to tell them so. He came in as she spoke; but it struck her at once that, though prompt and cheerful in reassuring his dismayed guests, there was something a little pre-occupied in his manner. Mr. Bourne looked red and discomposed, and took up the newspaper with a muttered growl about young fellows' obstinacy, which seemed to disconcert Mrs. Archdale not a little. Ernest, who came last, was paler than usual, and shivered as he advanced to the fire.

"What is the matter?" said Cecilia, in a half-frightened whisper to Kate. Her levity had vanished, and she was glancing at the door in expectation, when Mr. Bourne looked sharply round, to observe, "Please to shut that, my dear. If other people choose to be frozen there is no need that we should."

"I thought Mr. Frankland was coming in. Have his ninepins arrived yet?"

There was a momentary silence. Evidently Mr. Frankland was not coming in. Sir Marcus stirred the fire into a blaze, turned his back to it, and spoke. "He is a good boy, and if his legs do run him into mischief, it will not be the fault of his heart, at any rate."

"But what is he doing, father?" asked Miss Combermere. She was convinced that something had happened which he would fain make light of, but the question escaped her unawares. The answer was most unexpected.

"The lad who brought up his portmanteau through the snow reported a breakdown on the line, and that help was urgently signalled for. Some of the labourers volunteered, and Lewis is gone with them."

CHAPTER III.

A FOGGY NIGHT.

THE exigencies of story-telling require that the reader should go back with us a brief space, and for the better comprehension of what is to follow, take up the history a few days earlier, in a very different quarter.

Weather has more to do with the events of the world than people sometimes take into consideration. The passengers by a train from Cologne to Ostend, who had been speculating on the prospect of a

smooth passage to Dover, on a certain January night, were not a little discomforted to find they were approaching a wall of sea fog, through which the lights of the town, the pier, and the station looked dim and hazy; a raw damp clung to everything—to the windows, the posts, the seats, the very hats of the officials; and a young English lady, who had let down the window to investigate matters for herself, was fain to yield to the remonstrances of her fellow travellers, and pull it up again in haste. They exchanged remarks among themselves about the annoyance of winter travelling, and the recent accidents from collisions, but she paid little heed to what they said, and made her preparations, as if it were a matter of course, to go on, whatever the weather might be. If it were only a calm night, she thought, a little fog, more or less, would not much signify; and, indeed, her mind was so full of other matters, that the kind of dream in which her long journey had hitherto been performed, seemed only now assuming a somewhat mistier character. There was one on the look out, however, to whom waking dreams were an untried luxury, and who was rarely troubled with them in his sleep. This was a weather-beaten, grey-headed man, small and spare in stature, but wiry and strong, in spite of his years, who came to assist his young mistress to descend, taking possession of all her light luggage, as if it would have been a personal affront for her to carry even her own shawl.

"A bad night for you, Miss Adela," he said, in a tone of mingled respect and intimacy, natural towards one whom he had often carried in his arms. "From what I can make out, there's not much chance of our getting any further to-night. They say these fogs are sometimes as bad as any in London."

"It is better than a rough sea," said the young lady, wearily. "I shall be too glad to get the passage over, Charles."

"Yes, ma'am, of course you will; but, begging your pardon, to be kept out six-and-thirty hours longer than you need, won't help you much in getting on. If you'll just come along with me, Miss Adela, I'll get you some coffee, and go down myself to the boat, and look at the weather, and hear what they say on board. If so be it's all safe for a lady to cross, I'll come back and let you know."

The young Englishwoman, whose deep mourning was in keeping with the melancholy which seemed to weigh her down, allowed him to arrange as he thought proper, and waited with the patience of mental exhaustion, unconscious of the notice she herself attracted from more than one of the detained passengers, as they came in and went out in all the confusion and perplexity consequent upon this untoward check to their progress. Her crape veil had been thrown back, and her rare, pensive beauty caused several whispers to be exchanged among those who had leisure to look at it. Under other circumstances this might have caused her annoyance; but she was now too sad and too tired to notice it, and remained on the seat near the stove, where Charles had placed her, almost as motionless as if

she had fallen asleep. The first thing that roused her from her dream was an apology for incommoding Mademoiselle, spoken in the Anglo-French which there is no mistaking; and as Adela Granard drew her chair aside to make room for the new comer, their eyes met, as strangers to each other in the first moment, but wakening in Adela's memory a thrill of old associations.

The person who had approached to warm her hands was a thin elderly woman in rusty black, her face half hidden by the folds of a woollen comforter, which, strange to say, was the first thing that roused the young lady's recollections. Nobody that she had ever met since had that peculiar way of enveloping her mouth and cheeks in grey crochet, with two long black tassels under her chin; and though the dim eyes betrayed no recognition, Miss Granard felt more and more convinced she was right.

"I think I cannot be mistaken," she said: "you are Miss Joseph?"

The person addressed started, and peered with straining eyes at the beautiful face on which the gaslight was now falling.

"I beg your pardon, but I have not the pleasure of knowing you."

"But you are Miss Joseph, whether you know me or not?"

"Yes, I am; but really I cannot remember ——"

"I am not surprised that you do not remember me, for it is long since we met; but you were very good to a troublesome child in those days, and I, at least, have not forgotten them. Among your worst pupils, try and remember Adela Granard."

"Dear little Adela! My darling! Excuse me, my dear young lady," as the long lean fingers grasped Adela's hand, "my sight is not very good, and I am forgetting myself, as well as the lapse of years. How grown you are, and how altered! Dear me, to think of your remembering me at once! It is very kind of you—very."

"And where are you living now?" asked Adela, after the first greetings had been exchanged. "When I last heard of you, which was a long time ago, you were travelling with Mrs. Dangerfield."

"I am with her still. She lives in this place."

"Does she, indeed? I had no idea of it. How is she?"

Miss Joseph shook her head. "So unwell, Miss Granard, that if it were not taking too great a liberty—are you intending to cross to-night?"

"It depends on the fog. If my servant reports that it is safe, I must go."

"And not stop to see Mrs. Dangerfield?"

"My dear Miss Joseph, she would not like me to go to her at this hour, without notice. I do not even know Mr. Dangerfield by sight."

"The Professor," said Miss Joseph, with an emphasis on the title, "is now in Paris. She is alone, and I think you would do her good—if anyone can."

She looked very wistfully at the young lady as she spoke, but

before the latter could answer Charles came up to them, his mind evidently quite settled about the crossing. It was out of the question for Miss Granard, and he had heard of a nice quiet hotel not far off, to which he would take her at once. Miss Joseph caught at the word.

"You cannot cross—you must stay to-night—come and sleep at Mrs. Dangerfield's."

"But we have not written to each other for so long, she may not like it. I will try and call in the morning, if I have time."

"She might not be able to see you then. Do come with me! I am sure the sight of your face would cheer her a little." Then, as Adela still stood, reluctant to yield, though unable to explain why, she grasped her hand in both hers, and her poor weak eyes swam with moisture. "If she were happy and gay, I wouldn't ask you; but she wants a friend, and you were her's once, I know. Will you not try and see if you are not welcome?"

"Since you wish it so much, I will," was the reply, made with an effort; for, weary and depressed as the traveller was, the prospect of rest and silence at the hotel had been much more inviting. A few words of explanation sufficed for Charles. He was not long in making the necessary arrangements about her luggage, of which only the lighter portion was to go with her; and then procured a carriage for her and Miss Joseph, accompanying them on the box.

The fog had increased considerably, and Adela, to whom the place was new, in vain attempted to reconnoitre from the window. The slowness of their pace made the drive appear a long one, and she had more time to think than was favourable either to spirits or courage before the vehicle rumbled over the paved floor of a covered hall; and Miss Joseph, alighting in silence, was standing to show her the way.

An old maid servant, apparently in the midst of some culinary operations, was the only domestic visible; and Charles, while paying the driver, cast a keen glance around him, as if rather doubtful what sort of place they had come to. What Adela noticed first was the loftiness of the marble staircase and the extent of the passages, as well as the handsome furniture, curtains, and floors of the suite of reception rooms through which she was conducted: a chill dreariness pervaded all, as if the rooms were only set out for show, and Miss Joseph the person appointed to show them. The light of an occasional gas-burner was not powerful enough to reveal how ill the display of magnificence was carried out in detail; but the want of that indescribable quality which belongs to a home was strongly felt; and Adela betrayed the feeling in the casual remark that she supposed Mrs. Dangerfield had a large acquaintance in the place.

"She knows very few people," was the answer.

"These rooms would receive a great crowd."

"They would; they have done so," said Miss Joseph. "Will you come this way?"

She passed through a vestibule, ornamented with statues and ferns, and as she opened a side door into a small, dim apartment warmed by a stove, with an open fireplace, a weak, rather querulous voice issued from a sofa.

"Here you are at last! What has made you so long?"

"I was detained; and the fog is so thick that the boats will hardly be able to go out to-night. I have brought you a visitor."

"A visitor to me? What *do* you mean?"

The speaker had risen, and was slowly coming forward, when Miss Joseph, having lighted a candle, held it up before the guest.

Her face, her figure, her attitude, half hesitating, half compassionate, had an electric effect on the person she had come to see. Flinging her arms wildly into the air, she sobbed out something which sounded like a broken thanksgiving; and, tottering across the room, opened her arms so imploringly that Adela could not withhold the desired embrace, startled though she was, by finding what a shattered, quivering frame was pressed in her arms.

Years had passed since they were on intimate terms together —years which had given the younger lady only too much reason to mourn over the change that had fallen on the much admired friend. In many ways had her esteem been lowered, her feelings revolted, her sense of right and wrong called up in vehement protest; but the sound of Hester's voice, though altered by illness, and the passionate warmth of the welcome, made the traveller feel that something was still left out of the wreck of the past, for which it had been worth while to come.

"And where did you pick up this treasure, Miss Joseph? I little thought what a net I was letting down into the sea when I asked you to go out. But—did you telegraph?"

Miss Joseph shook her head.

"That was right—quite right. Now bestir yourself, like a good woman, and make this dear thing warm and comfortable. What would she like best? Tea? Miss Joseph is a true Englishwoman, and allows no ignorant foreigner to meddle with that mystery. Take off some of your wraps, dear child. What lovely fur!" examining the lining of Adela's cloak. "You have been where such things are necessaries; to me they are a forbidden luxury. Sit down, and let me look at you. I always said you would grow up handsomer than ever I had been, and my words have come true."

Miss Granard passively allowed herself to be relieved of some of her defences against the weather; but the agitation which made her hostess voluble seemed to freeze up her own powers of speech. If she had changed for the better, developing the attractions of an engaging girl into those of a beautiful young woman, time and trouble had dealt less gently with Mrs. Dangerfield, who looked ten years older than she really was, and had suffered the loss, not of youth and bloom alone, but of elegance and refinement. Features, complexion,

hair, all were robbed of their charm; the attempts to conceal the change by artificial means serving but to make it more apparent. Her dress was as altered as her person: the faded trimmings, the torn lace, the soiled muslin, the want of that freshness and neatness that give grace to the plainest material, struck Adela's senses with a painful blending of repugnance and pity. That this once favoured and adored woman had reaped what she had sown, by her second marriage against the warnings of her best friends, was a sight which touched her compassion, even while it reminded her of those who were gone, whose advice Hester had too thanklessly rejected.

"What would my dear ones have said if they could but have seen this?" she thought, while answering, or trying to answer, the stream of questions her entertainer poured out as an accompaniment to Miss Joseph's tea.

"And so you are thrown on the world alone, my dear child? But not unprovided for—that is well. I do not covet a large fortune for you; it does a woman very little good. Look at me, dear; you remember how particular I used to be, and how proud poor Harry was of my appearance. I have learned to forget what new things are like, for I never see them. And your dear father and mother and sister, all gone—and your brother settled in India! Yes, I remember hearing about it, and crying myself to sleep. Childish, I know, but I could not help it. I have often talked of you; have I not, Miss Joseph?"

"Lately you have," said Miss Joseph, who was quietly attending to the visitor's wants, which would otherwise have been neglected.

"Lately? Ah, yes, because I knew she was in trouble, and that might make it easier for her to feel for me. The less kindness I deserve the more she will show, if kindness, like good looks, be hereditary. Oh, Adela, if I could but have had one grasp of your father's hand when I wanted a friend ——"

"Suppose you drink your tea, Mrs. Dangerfield, and talk to Miss Granard to-morrow," interposed Miss Joseph. "She has had a long journey, and is tired."

The advice was good: but, like all she had ever received, it was thrown away on Hester Dangerfield. She talked on, more and more rapidly, without waiting for answer or comment.

"You remember, Adela, how happy we were, that summer you spent with us. Harry always liked you for being so truthful and straightforward. I wish half the world were the same. You must not expect to find it so, though. No one was ever more deceived than I have been. I thought everybody mistaken but myself; and you see what I am—a wreck, left to drift or to sink, as it may please wind and weather. And the money I brought—Harry's money—I daresay you think I am a rich woman, living in this large house! I live in it because I must; but I have no use for those large rooms, and no servants to keep them up. Justine does what she can, or chooses;

but if it were not for good Miss Joseph, I should be worse off than if I lived in the kitchen. She lives a great deal there herself—don't you, Miss Joseph? And we manage on wonderfully little, so as to have as few bills as possible. That is new to you, isn't it? Did you ever see the Professor?"

Adela replied in the negative.

"Ah! when you see him, you will understand us better. He is not to be known in a moment, is he, Miss Joseph?"

"He is in Paris, is he not?" asked Adela.

Mrs. Dangerfield laughed; a strange laugh, that struck a chill on the listener.

"Your question shows you do not know him. He left me a week ago to attend some scientific meetings in Paris; but he may be very near us for all I can tell, and he may be watching you at this moment. Miss Joseph, she looks as if she thought I was mad."

"You should explain yourself," said Miss Joseph, "your young friend does not understand you."

"Adela, child, you are too clever to believe in mesmerism, and all that sort of thing, of course?"

"Not particularly clever," said Adela, "but not very credulous."

"You believe nothing you cannot understand?"

"I never professed anything so unreasonable. My creed would indeed be a short one."

"But you will not believe that a man in Paris can tell what we are doing here in Ostend?"

"Certainly not, unless somebody gives him the information."

"I see. Well, wait till you have the proof. Meanwhile, do not judge me, or anything I do, or have done, till you learn more. I am not out of my mind—that I tell you at once, that there may be no mistake; but I act sometimes as if I were, and am not always sure about it, myself."

"I think I had better show Miss Granard to her room," put in Miss Joseph, "she looks tired with her journey."

"Do so; she has a right to be tired. She has not yet learned what it is to be past fatigue—to be so thoroughly worn out, and ground down, that there is no more sensation left, even of wearing and grinding. What a shame it is to frighten her so! Don't mind me, child; I must talk, let the world wag as it will. Go with Miss Joseph; and if she does not make you comfortable, don't come to me, for I should only make matters worse."

The bedroom into which Adela Granard was conducted was as bare of all comfort as could well have been imagined; but she was too experienced a traveller to be disconcerted by the absence of English luxuries. The stove was burning, and her goods had been brought upstairs by Charles, who was to sleep himself at the nearest hotel. Miss Joseph lighted two candles, and then stood looking about for

something more to do; but Adela was too anxious to dwell on her own personal matters.

"Miss Joseph," she said, "I know we are both thinking of the same thing. What is the matter with poor Mrs. Dangerfield?"

"She is dying."

"Dying? of what? Has she had advice?"

"She has. No one can save her; and no one can wish her to live as she lives now."

"Tell me the truth—is he kind to her?"

Miss Joseph compressed her lips, and shook her head: the gesture was enough. There was a short silence.

"Tell me about Mr. Dangerfield—the Professor," said Adela, presently. "What is his occupation?"

"He calls himself one of the new philosophers; he lectures on his philosophy, and his own inventions. He has made great discoveries in science," added Miss Joseph, with a dryness that was not without irony.

"And what that poor thing said just now—is that what he tells her?"

"My dear, he has contrived to impress her with a kind of belief in his mysterious powers, which is very bad for both her mind and her body; and he is clever enough to keep up the impression in a way we cannot detect."

"You are not convinced, then, of his scientific powers?" asked Adela, who had heard and read enough to feel very little awe of such mysteries. Miss Joseph again shook her head, and this time contemptuously.

"My father was what he pretends to be; I am not so easily taken in by a few long words. What I believe is that he must have confederates."

"In what?"

"In knowing what goes on in his absence. Mrs. Dangerfield is right, so far; he will soon let us know that he is aware of your visit."

"How very disagreeable! Somebody watches you, of course, and telegraphs to him. But that is very simple sorcery; it is only keeping a spy."

"It would be simple, if we could detect it. As it is, Mrs. Dangerfield will not admit the theory. She believes that this science gives her husband superhuman knowledge; and lightly as she may speak of it, it is one cause of the complaint that is killing her."

"Was this why you brought me here?"

"It was; but not on her account alone. There is another, who may yet be saved, if you have the courage."

"Yourself, dear Miss Joseph?"

"No, thank you; he cannot touch me—or if he did, it would not much matter. I spoke of her child."

"I was going to ask you if Emily was still living. Not seeing or hearing anything about her I did not mention her name."

"She is living, and is at a friend's house close by. You will see her to-morrow; and, if she is to be saved I feel sure it must be by you. Good night."

And Miss Joseph was gone before another word could be spoken.

The young lady, thus strangely circumstanced, was gifted with no small amount of spirit and courage; but her strength had been largely drawn upon during the last six months, and the wounds of family bereavement were still unhealed. It is, therefore, no matter of surprise if her sensations, when left alone, were those of dreariness and dismay, and that her first care was to examine her fastenings, and make them as secure as she could. Even then, it was not without the exercise of habitual self-discipline, and the solace of devotion, that she could bring herself to seek the repose she so much needed. When she did so, however, fatigue overpowered everything else, and she was soon in the deep, dreamless sleep of forgetfulness.

From this she was suddenly startled by a sound in her room, and the light of a candle that was flashed in her face.

(To be continued.)

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Ring! but ring softly, O ye midnight bells!
Pass like a dream across the hills and dells:
Soft, as the snow enfolding earthly things
Falls in the night with sound like angels' wings.

Ring! with a burst of deep and heart-felt praise
For all the happiness of passing days:
For ev'ry flower that grew beneath our feet,
Breathing around our lives its incense sweet.

O bells, ring out the memory of pain!
Tell softly how the flowers shall bloom again,
And hope arise, like snowdrops from the snow:
A starry crown—no more a cross of woe.

Ring softly, for the year is nearly dead:
O let him go with blessings on his head!
For, if he brought us sorrowings and cares,
We entertained but angels unawares.

Softly into silence chime those dream-like bells;
Solemn midnight tolleth over hills and dells;
Holy voices murmur, as the echoes fall—
"Take the future trustfully, for God is over all!"

C. L. A.

LADY JENKINS.

"HAD I better go? I should like to."

"Go! why of course you had better go," answered the squire, putting down the letter.

"It will be the very thing for you, Johnny," added Mrs. Todhetley. "We were saying yesterday that you ought to have a change."

I had not been well for some time; not strong. My old headaches stuck to me worse than usual; Duftham complained that the pulse was feeble. Therefore, a letter from Dr. Knox of Lefford, pressing me to go and stay with them, seemed to have come on purpose. Janet had added a postscript: "You *must* come, Johnny Ludlow, if it is only to see my two babies, and you must not think of staying less than a month." Tod was from home, visiting in Leicestershire.

Three days, and I was off, bag and baggage. To Worcester first, and then onwards again, direct for Lefford. The very journey seemed to do me good. It was a lovely spring day: the hedges were bursting into bud; primroses and violets nestled in the mossy banks.

You have not forgotten, I daresay, how poor Janet Carey's hard life, her troubles, and the sickness those troubles brought, culminated in a brave ending when Arnold Knox, of Lefford, made her his wife. Some five years had elapsed since then, and we were all of us that much older. They had asked me to visit them over and over again, but until now I had not done it. Mr. Tamlyn, Arnold's former master and present partner, with whom they lived, was getting in years; he only attended to a few of the old patients now.

It was a cross-grained kind of route, and much longer than it need have been could we have gone straight as a bird flies. The train made all kinds of détours, and I had to change no less than three times. For the last few miles I had had the carriage to myself, but at Toome Junction, the last station before Lefford, a gentleman got in: an elderly man with grey hair. Not a syllable did we say, one to another—Englishmen like—and at length Lefford was gained.

"In to time exactly," cried this gentleman then, peering out at the gas-lighted station, "the clock's on the stroke of eight."

Getting my portmanteau, I looked about for Dr. Knox's brougham, which would be waiting for me, and soon pitched upon one, standing near the flys. But my late fellow passenger strode on before me.

"I thought I spied you out, Wall," he said to the coachman. "Quite a chance your being here, I suppose?"

"I'm waiting for a gentleman from Worcester, sir," answered the man, looking uncommonly pleased, as he touched his hat. "Dr. Knox couldn't come himself."

"Well, I suppose you can take me as well as the gentleman from

Worcester," answered the other, as he turned round from patting the old horse, and saw me standing there. And we got into the carriage.

It proved to be Mr. Shuttleworth, he who had been old Tamlyn's partner for a short while, and had married his sister. Tamlyn's people did not know he was coming to-night, he told me. He was on his way to a distant place, to see a relative who was ill; by making a round of it, he could take Lefford, and drop in at Mr. Tamlyn's for the night—and was doing so.

Janet came running to the door, Mr. Tamlyn walking slowly behind her. He had a sad countenance, and scanty grey hair, and looked ever so much older than his actual years. Since his son died, poor Bertie, the sunshine of life had gone out for him. Very much surprised were they to see Mr. Shuttleworth as well as me.

Janet gave us a sumptuous tea-dinner, pouring out unlimited cups of tea and pressing us to eat all the good things. Except that she had filled out a little from the skeleton she was, and looked as joyous now as she had once looked sad, I saw little difference in her. Her boy, Arnold, was aged three and a half: the little girl, named Margaret, after Miss Deveen, could just walk.

"Never were such children in all the world before, if you listen to Janet," cried old Tamlyn, looking at her fondly—for he had learnt to love Janet as he would a daughter—and she laughed shyly and blushed.

"You don't ask after mine," put in Mr. Shuttleworth, quaintly; "my one girl. She is four years old now. Such a wonder! such a paragon! other babies are nothing to it, as Bessy says. Bessy is silly over that child, Tamlyn."

Old Tamlyn just shook his head. They suddenly remembered the one only child he had lost, and changed the subject.

"And what about everything?" asked Mr. Shuttleworth, lighting a cigar, as we sat round the fire after dinner, Janet having gone out to see to a room for Shuttleworth, or perhaps to contemplate her sleeping babies. "I am glad you have at last given up the parish work."

"There's enough to do without it; the practice increases daily," cried Tamlyn. "Arnold is so much liked."

"How are all the old patients?"

"That is a comprehensive question," smiled Tamlyn. "Some are flourishing, and some few are, of course, dead."

"Is Dockett with you still?"

"No. Dockett is in London at St. Thomas's. Sam Jenkins is with us in his place. A clever young fellow: worth two of Dockett."

"Who is Sam Jenkins?"

"A nephew of Lady Jenkins—you remember her? At least, of her late husband's."

"I should think I do remember Lady Jenkins," laughed Shuttleworth. "How is she? Flourishing about the streets as usual in that red-wheeled carriage of hers, dazzling as the rising sun?"

"Lady Jenkins is not well," replied Tamlyn, gravely. "She gives me some concern."

"In what way does she give you concern?"

"Chiefly because I can't find out what it is that's amiss with her?"

"Has she been ill long?"

"For some months now. She is not very ill: goes out in her carriage to dazzle the town, as you observe, and has her regular soirées at home. But I don't like her symptoms: I don't understand them, and they get worse. She has never been well, to say really well, since that French journey."

"What French journey?"

"At the end of last summer, my Lady Jenkins must needs get it into her head that she should like to see Paris. Stupid old thing, to go all the way to France for the first time in her life! She did go, taking Mina Knox with her—who is growing up as pretty a girl as you'd wish to see. And, by the way, Shuttleworth, Mina is in luck. She has had a fortune left her. An old gentleman, not related to them at all, except that he was Mina's godfather, left her seven thousand pounds last year in his will. Arnold is the trustee."

"I am glad of it. Little Mina and I used to be great friends. Her mother is as disagreeable as ever I suppose?"

"As if she'd ever change from being *that!* I have no patience with her. She fritters away her own income, and then comes here and worries Arnold's life out with her embarrassments. He does for her more than I should do. Educates young Dicky, for one thing."

"No doubt. Knox always had a soft place in his heart. But about Lady Jenkins?"

"Lady Jenkins went over to Paris with her maid, taking Mina as her companion. It was in August. They stayed three weeks there, racketing about to all kinds of show places, and over-doing it finely. When they got to Boulogne on their way back, expecting to cross over at once, they found they had to wait. A gale was raging, and the boats could not get out. So they put up at an hotel there; and, that night, Lady Jenkins was taken alarmingly ill—the journey and the racketing and the French living had been too much for her. Young people can stand these things, Johnny Ludlow: old ones can't," added Tamlyn, looking at me across the hearth.

"Very true, sir. How old is Lady Jenkins?"

"Just seventy. But you'd not have thought her so much before that French journey. Until then she was a lively, active, bustling woman, with a good-natured, pleasant word for everybody. Now she is weary, dull, inanimate; seems to be, half her time, in a kind of lethargy."

"What was the nature of the illness?" asked Shuttleworth. "A seizure?"

"No, nothing of that sort. I'm sure I don't know what it was,"

added old Tamlyn, rubbing back his scanty grey hair in a kind of perplexity. "Anyway, they feared she was going to die. The French doctor said her getting well was a miracle. She lay ill ten days, keeping her bed, and was still ill and very weak when she reached home. Mina believes that a lady who was detained at the same hotel by the weather, and who came forward and offered her services as nurse, saved Lady Jenkins's life. She was so kind and attentive; never going to her bed afterwards until Lady Jenkins was up from hers. She came home with them."

"Who did? This lady?"

"Yes; and has since remained with Lady Jenkins as companion. She is a Madame St. Vincent; a young widow ——"

"A Frenchwoman!" exclaimed Mr. Shuttleworth.

"Yes; but you'd not think it. She speaks English just as we do, and looks English. A very nice, pleasant young woman; as kind and loving to Lady Jenkins as though she were her daughter. I am glad they fell in with her. She—oh, is it you, Sam?"

A tall smiling young fellow of eighteen, or so, had come in. It was Sam Jenkins: and, somehow, I took to him at once. Mr. Shuttleworth shook hands and said he was glad to hear he promised to be a second Abernethy. Upon which Sam's wide mouth opened in glee, showing a set of nice teeth.

"I thought Dr. Knox was here, sir," he said to Mr. Tamlyn, as if he would apologise for entering.

"Dr. Knox is gone over to the Brook, but I should think he'd be back soon now. Why? Is he wanted?"

"Only a message, sir, from old Willoughby's. They'd like him to call there as soon as convenient in the morning."

"Now Sam, don't you be irreverent," reproved his master. "*Old* Willoughby! I should say Mr. Willoughby if I were you. He is no older than I am. You young men of the present day are becoming very disrespectful: it was different in my time."

Sam laughed pleasantly. Close upon that, Dr. Knox came in. He was more altered than Janet, looking graver and older, his light hair as wild as ever. He was just thirty now.

Mr. Shuttleworth left in the morning, and afterwards Dr. Knox took me to see his stepmother. Her house (but it was his house, not hers), Rose Villa, was in a suburb of the town called the London Road. Mrs. Knox was a dark, unpleasing looking woman; her voice harsh, her crinkled black hair untidy—it was never anything else in a morning. The two eldest girls were in the room. Mina was seventeen, Charlotte twelve months younger. Mina was the prettiest; a fair girl with a mild face and pleasant blue eyes, her manner and voice as quiet as her face. Charlotte seemed rather strong-minded.

"Are you going to the soirée next door to night, Arnold?" cried Mrs. Knox, as we were leaving.

"I think not," he answered. "Janet wrote to decline."

"You wished her to decline, I daresay!" retorted Mrs. Knox. "You always did despise the soirées, Arnold."

Dr. Knox laughed pleasantly. "I have never had much time for soirées," he said; "and Janet does not care for them. Besides, we think it unkind to leave Mr. Tamlyn alone:" at which latter remark Mrs. Knox tossed her head.

"I must call on Lady Jenkins, as I am up here," observed Dr. Knox to me, when we were leaving. "You don't mind, do you, Johnny?"

"I shall like it. They were talking about her last night."

It was only a few yards higher up. A handsome dwelling, double the size of Rose Villa, with two big iron gates flanked by imposing pillars, on which was written in gold letters, as large as life, "Jenkins House."

Dr. Knox laughed. "Sir Daniel Jenkins rechristened it that," he said, dropping his voice, lest any ears should be behind the open windows: "it used to be called 'Rose Bank.' They moved up here four years ago; he was taken ill soon afterwards and died, leaving nearly all his money to his wife unconditionally: it is over four thousand a year. He was in business as a drysalter, and was knighted during the time he was mayor."

"Who will come in for the money?"

"That is as Lady Jenkins pleases. There are lots of relations, Jenkinses. Sir Daniel partly brought up two orphan nephews—at least, he paid for their schooling and left each a little money to place them out in life. You have seen the younger of them, Sam, who is with us; the other, Dan, is articled to a solicitor in the town, old Belford. Two other cousins are in the drysalting business; and the ironmonger, Sir Daniel's youngest brother, left several sons and daughters. The old drysalter had no end of nephews and nieces, and might have provided for them all. Perhaps his widow will do so."

Not possessing the faintest idea of what "drysalting" might be, unless it had to do with curing hams, I was about to enquire, when the house door was thrown open by a pompous looking gentleman in black—the butler—who showed us into the dining-room, where Lady Jenkins was sitting. I liked her at first sight. She was short and stout, and had pink cheeks and a pink turned-up nose, and wore a "front" of flaxen curls, surmounted by a big smart cap with red roses and blue ribbons in it; but there was not an atom of pretence about her, and her blue eyes were kindly. She took the hands of Dr. Knox in hers, and she shook mine warmly, saying she had heard of Johnny Ludlow.

Turning from her, I caught the eyes of a younger lady fixed upon me. She looked about seven-and-twenty, and wore a fashionable black-and-white muslin gown. Her hair was dark, her eyes were a reddish brown, her cheeks had a fine, fixed bloom upon them. The face was plain, and it struck me that I had seen it somewhere before. Dr. Knox greeted her as Madame St. Vincent.

When we first went in, Lady Jenkins seemed to wake up from a doze. In two minutes she had fallen into a doze again, or as good as one. Her eyelids drooped, she sat perfectly quiet, never speaking unless spoken to, and her face wore a kind of dazed, or stupid look. Madame St. Vincent talked enough for both of them; she appealed frequently to Lady Jenkins—"Was it not so, dear Lady Jenkins?"—or "Don't you remember that, dear Lady Jenkins?" and Lady Jenkins docilely answered "Yes, dear," or "Yes, Patty."

That Madame St. Vincent was a pleasant woman, as Mr. Tamlyn had said, and that she spoke English as we did, as he had also said, there could not be a doubt of. Her tongue could not be taken for any but a native tongue; moreover, unless my ears deceived me, it was native Worcestershire. Ever and anon, too, a homely word would be dropped by her in the heat of conversation that belonged to Worcestershire proper, and to no other county.

"You will come to my soirée this evening, Mr. Ludlow," Lady Jenkins woke up to say to me as we were leaving.

"Johnny can come; I daresay he would like to," put in Dr. Knox; "although I and Janet cannot——"

"Which is very churlish of you," interposed Mme. St. Vincent.

"Well, you know what impediments lie in our way," he said, smiling. "Sam can come up with Johnny, if you like, Lady Jenkins."

"To be sure; let Sam come," she answered, readily. "How is Sam? and how does he get on?"

"He is very well, and gets on well."

Dr. Knox walked down the road in silence, looking grave. "Every time I see her she seems to me more altered," he observed presently, and I found he was speaking of Lady Jenkins. "*Something* is amiss with her, and I cannot tell what. I wish Tamlyn would let me take the case in hand!"

Two peculiarities obtained at Lefford. The one was that the universal dinner hour, no matter how much you might go in for fashion, was in the middle of the day; the other was that every evening gathering, no matter how unpretentious, was invariably called a "soirée." They were the customs of the town.

The soirée was in full sway when I reached Jenkins House that night—at six o'clock. Madame St. Vincent and Charlotte Knox sat behind the tea-table in a cloud of steam, filling the cups as fast as the company emptied them; a footman, displaying large white calves, carried round a tray of bread-and-butter and cake. Lady Jenkins sat near the fire in an easy chair, wearing a red velvet gown and lofty turban. She nodded to the people as they came in, and smiled at them with quite a silly expression. Mina and Charlotte Knox were in white muslin and pink roses. Mina looked very pretty indeed, and as mild as milk; Charlotte downright and strong-minded. Every five minutes or so, Mme. St. Vincent—the white streamers on her rich black silk dress floating behind her—would leave the tea-table to

run up to Lady Jenkins and ask if she wanted anything. Sam had not come with me: he had to go out with Dr. Knox.

"Mr. Jenkins," announced the pompous butler, showing in a tall young fellow of twenty. He had just the same sort of honest, good-natured face that had taken my fancy in Sam; and I guessed that this was his brother, the solicitor. He came up to Lady Jenkins.

"How do you do, aunt?" he said, bending to kiss her. "Hearing of your soirée to-night, I thought I might come."

"Why, my dear, you know you may come; you are always welcome. Which is it?" she added, looking up at him stupidly, "Dan, or Sam?"

"It is I—Dan," he answered: and if ever I heard pain in a tone, I heard it in his.

"You are Johnny Ludlow, I know!" he said, holding out his hand to me in the warmest manner, as he turned from his aunt. "Sam told me about you this morning." And we were friends from that moment.

Dan brought himself to an anchor by Mina Knox. He was no beauty certainly, but he had a good face. Leaning over Mina's chair, he began whispering to her—and she whispered back again. Was there anything between them? It looked like it—at any rate, on his side—judging by his earnest expression and the loving looks that shot from his honest grey eyes.

"Are you really French?" I asked of Madame St. Vincent, while standing by her side to drink some tea.

"Really," she answered, smiling. "Why?"

"Because you speak English exactly like ourselves."

"I speak it better than I do French," she candidly said. "My mother was English: and our old maid-servant was English, and they educated me between them. It was my father who was French—and he died early."

"Was your mother a native of Worcestershire?"

"Oh dear no: she came from Wales. What made you think of such a thing?"

"Your accent is just like our Worcestershire accent. I am Worcestershire myself: and I could have thought you were."

She shook her head. "Never was there in my life, Mr. Ludlow. Is that why you looked at me so much when you were here with Dr. Knox this morning?"

"No: I looked at you because your face struck me as being familiar," I frankly said. "I thought I must have seen you somewhere before. Have I, I wonder?"

"Very likely—if you have been much in the South of France," she answered: "at a place called Brétage."

"But I have never been at Brétage."

"Then I don't see how we can have met. I have lived there all my life. My father and mother died there; my poor husband died there. I only came away from it last year."

"It must be my fancy, I suppose. One does see likenesses——"

"Captain Collinson," shouted the butler again.

A military looking man, got up in the pink of fashion, loomed in with a lordly air; you'd have said the room belonged to him. At first he seemed all hair: bushy curls, bushy whiskers, a moustache, and a fine flowing beard, all of a purple black. Quite a flutter stirred the room: Captain Collinson was evidently somebody.

After making his bow to Lady Jenkins, he distributed his favours generally, shaking hands with this person, talking with that. At last he turned our way.

"Ah, how do you do, madame?" he said to Mme. St. Vincent, his tone ceremonious. "I fear I am late."

It was not a minute that he stood before her, only while he said this: but, strange to say, something in his face or voice struck upon my memory. The face, as much as could be seen of it for hair, seemed familiar to me—just as madame's had seemed.

"Who is he?" I whispered to her, following him with my eyes.

"Captain Collinson."

"Yes, I heard the name. But—do you know anything of him?—who he is?"

She shook her head. "Not much; nothing of my own knowledge. He is in an Indian regiment, and is home on sick leave."

"I wonder which regiment it is? One of our fellows at Dr. Frost's got appointed to one in Madras, I remember."

"The 30th, Bengal Cavalry, is Captain Collinson's. By his conversation, he appears to have spent nearly the whole of his life in India. It is said he is of good family, and has a snug private fortune. I don't know any more of him than that," concluded Madame St. Vincent, as she once more rose to go to Lady Jenkins.

"He may have a snug private fortune, and he may have family, but I do not like him," put in Charlotte Knox, in her decisive manner.

"Neither do I, Lotty," added Dan—who was then at the tea table: and his tone was just as emphatic as Charlotte's.

He had come up to get a cup of tea for Mina. Before he could carry it to her, Captain Collinson had taken up the place he had occupied at Mina's elbow, and was whispering to her in a most impressive manner. Mina seemed all in a flutter—and there was certainly no further room for Dan.

"Don't you want it now, Mina?" asked Dan, holding the cup towards her, and holding it in vain, for she was too much occupied to see it.

"Oh, thank you—no—I don't think I do want it now. Sorry you should have had the trouble."

Her words were just as fluttered as her manner. Dan brought the tea back and put it on the tray.

"Of course, she can't spare time to drink tea while *he* is there," cried Charlotte, resentfully, who had watched what passed. "That man has bewitched her, Dan."

"Not quite yet, I think," said Dan, quietly. "He is trying to do it. There is no love lost between you and him, I see, Lotty."

"Not a ghost of it," nodded Lotty. "The town may be going wild in its admiration of him, but I am not: and the sooner he betakes himself back to India to his regiment, the better.

"I hope he will not take Mina with him," said Dan, gravely.

"I hope not, either. But she is silly enough for anything."

"Who is that, that's silly enough for anything?" cried Madame St. Vincent, whisking back to her place.

"Mina," promptly replied Charlotte. "She asked for a cup of tea, and then said she did not want it."

Some of the people sat down to cards; some to music; some talked. It was the usual routine at these soirées, Mrs. Knox condescended to inform me—and, what more, she added, could be wished for? Conversation, music, and cards—they were the three best diversions of life: not that she herself much cared for music.

Poor Lady Jenkins did not join actively in either: she mostly dozed in her chair. When anybody spoke to her, she would wake up and say Yes or No; but that was all. Captain Collinson stood in a corner, talking to Mina behind a sheet of music. He appeared to be going over its bars with her, and to be as long doing it as if a whole opera were scored there.

At nine o'clock the supper-room was thrown open, and Captain Collinson handed in Lady Jenkins. Heavy suppers were not the mode at Lefford; neither, as a rule, did the guests sit down, save a few of the elder ones; but the table was covered with dainties. Sandwiches, meats in jelly, rissoles, lobster salad, and such like things that could be eaten with a fork, were supplied in abundance, with sweets and jellies.

"I hope you'll be able to make a supper, my dear," said Lady Jenkins to me in her comfortable way—for the eating seemed to wake her up. "You see, if one person began to give a grand sitting-down supper—fowls and ham, and that kind of thing—others would think themselves obliged to do it, and everybody can't afford that. So we all confine ourselves to this."

"And I like this best," I said.

"Do you, my dear: I'm glad of that. You eat away, now. Dan, is that you? Mind you make a good supper."

We both made a famous one. At least, I can answer for myself. And, at half-past ten, Dan and I departed together.

"How very good-natured Lady Jenkins seems to be!" I remarked.

"She is good-natured as the day, and always was," Dan warmly answered. "She has never been a bit different from what you see her to-night—kind to us all. You should have known her though in her best days, before she got ill. I never saw anyone so altered."

"What is it that's the matter with her?"

"I don't know," answered Dan. "I wish I did know. Sam tells

me Tamlyn does not know. I'm afraid he thinks it is the break-up of old age.—I'd be glad, though, if she did not patronise that Collinson so much."

"Everybody seems to patronise *him*."

"Or to let him patronise them," corrected Dan. "I can't like the fellow. He takes too much upon himself."

"He seems to be very popular. Quite the fashion."

"Yes, he is that. Since he came here, three or four months ago, the women have been running after him. Do *you* like him, Johnny Ludlow?" abruptly added Dan.

"I hardly know whether I do or not: I've not seen much of him," was my answer. "As a rule, I don't care for those people who take much upon themselves. The truth is, Dan," I laughed jokingly, "you think Collinson shows too much attention to Mina Knox."

Dan walked on for a few moments in silence. "I am not much afraid of that," he presently said. "It is the fellow himself I don't like."

"And you do like Mina?"

"Well—yes; I do. If Mina and I were older and my means justified it, I'd make her my wife to-morrow—I don't mind telling you so much. And if the man is after her, it is for the sake of her money, mind, not for herself. I'm sure of it. I can see."

"I thought Collinson had plenty of money of his own."

"So he has, I believe. But money never comes amiss to an extravagant and idle man; and I think that Mina's money makes her attraction in Collinson's eyes. I wish with all my heart she had never had it left her!" continued Dan, explosively. "What did Mina want with seven thousand pounds?"

"I daresay you would not object to it with her yourself."

"I'd as soon not have it. I hope I shall make my way in my profession, and make it well, and I would as soon take Mina without money as with. I'm sure her mother might have it, and welcome for me! She is always hankering after it."

"How do you know she is?"

"We do her business at old Belford's, and she gets talking about the money to him, making no scruple of openly wishing it was hers. She bothers Dr. Knox, who is Mina's trustee, to lend her some of it. As if Knox would!—she might just as well go and bother the moon. No! But for that confounded seven thousand pounds Collinson would let Mina alone."

I shook my head. He could not know it. Mina was very pretty. Dan saw my incredulity.

"I will tell you why I judge so," he resumed, dropping his voice to a low key. "Unless I am very much mistaken, Collinson likes somebody else—and that's Madame St. Vincent. Sam thinks so too."

It was more than I thought. They were cool to one another.

"But we have seen them when nobody else was by," contended

Dan. "When he and she were talking together alone: and I can tell you that there was an expression on his face, an anxiousness, an eagerness—I hardly know how to word it—that it never wore for Mina. Collinson's love is given to Madame. Rely upon that."

"Then, why should he not declare it?"

"Ah, I don't know. There may be various reasons. Her poverty perhaps—for she has nothing but the salary Lady Jenkins pays her. Or, he may not care to marry one who is only a companion: they say he is of good family himself. Another reason, and possibly the most weighty one, may be, that Madame does not like him."

"I don't think she does like him."

"I am sure she does not. She gives him angry looks, and she turns away from him with ill-disguised coldness. And so, that's about how the state of affairs lies up there," concluded Dan, shaking hands with me as we reached the door of his lodgings. "Captain Collinson's love is given to Madame St. Vincent, on the one hand, and to Mina's money on the other; and I think he is in a pretty puzzle which of the two to choose. Good night, Johnny Ludlow. Be sure to remember this is only between ourselves."

A week, or so, passed on. Janet was up to her eyes in preparations, expecting a visitor; no other than Miss Cattledon—if you have not forgotten her. Being fearfully particular in all ways, and given to fault-finding, as poor Janet only too well remembered, of course it was necessary to have things in apple-pie order.

"I should never hear the last of it as long as Aunt Jemima stayed, if so much as a speck of dust was in any of the rooms, or a chair out of place," said Janet to me laughingly, as she and the maids dusted and scrubbed away.

"What's she coming for, Janet?"

"She invited herself," replied Janet: "and indeed we shall be glad to see her. Miss Deveen is going to visit some friends in Devonshire, and Aunt Jemima takes the opportunity of coming here the while. I am sorry Arnold is so busy just now. He will not have much time to give to her—and she likes attention."

The cause of Dr. Knox's increased occupation, was Mr. Tamlyn's illness. For the past few days he had had feverish symptoms, and did not go out. Few medical men would have found the indisposition sufficiently grave to remain at home for; but Mr. Tamlyn was an exception. He gave in at the least thing now: and it was nothing at all unusual for Arnold Knox to find all the patients thrown on his own hands.

Amidst the patients so thrown this time was Lady Jenkins. She had caught cold at that soirée I have just told of. Going to the door in her old-fashioned, hospitable way, to speed the departure of the last guests, she had stayed there in the draught, talking, and began at once to sneeze and cough.

"There!" cried Madame St. Vincent, when my lady got back again, "you have gone and caught cold."

"I think I have," admitted Lady Jenkins. "I'll send for Tamlyn in the morning."

"Oh, my dear Lady Jenkins, we shall not want Tamlyn," dissented Madame. "I'll take care of you myself and have you well in no time."

But Lady Jenkins, though very much swayed by her kind companion, who was ever anxious for her, chose to have up Mr. Tamlyn, and sent him a private message herself.

He went up at once—evidently taking Madame by surprise—and saw his patient. The cold, being promptly treated, turned out to be mere nothing, though Mme. St. Vincent insisted on keeping the sufferer some days in bed. By the time Mr. Tamlyn was ill, she was well again, and there was not much necessity for Dr. Knox to take her: at least, on the score of her cold. But he did it.

One afternoon, when he was going up there late, he asked me if I would like the drive. And, while he paid his visit to Lady Jenkins I went in to Rose Villa. It was a fine warm afternoon, almost like summer, and Mrs. Knox and the girls were sitting in the garden. Dicky was there also. Dicky was generally at school from eight o'clock till six, but this was a half holiday. Dicky, eleven years old now, but very little of his age, was more troublesome than ever. Just now he was at open war with his two younger sisters and Miss Mack, the governess, who had gone indoors to escape him.

Leaning against the trunk of a tree, as he talked to Mrs. Knox, Mina, and Charlotte, stood Captain Collinson, the rays of the sun, now drawing westerly, shining full upon him, bringing out the purple glow of his hair, whiskers, beard, and moustache deeper than usual. Captain Collinson incautiously made much of Dicky, had told him attractive stories of the glories of war, and promised him a commission when he should be old enough. The result was, that Dicky had been living in the seventh heaven, had bought himself a tin sword, and wore it strapped to his waist, dangling down beneath his jacket. Dicky, wild to be a soldier, worshipped Captain Collinson as the prince of heroes, and followed him about like a shadow. An inkling of this ambition of Dicky's and of Captain Collinson's promise, had only reached Mrs. Knox's ears this very afternoon. It was a ridiculous promise of course, worth nothing, but Mrs. Knox took it up seriously.

"A commission for Dicky!—get Dicky a commission!" she exclaimed in a flutter that set her bracelets jangling, just as I arrived on the scene. "Why, what can you mean, Captain Collinson? Do you think I would have Dicky made into a soldier—to be shot at? Never. He is my only son. How can you put such ideas into his head?"

"Don't mind her," cried Dicky, shaking the captain's coat-tails. "I say, captain, don't you mind her."

Captain Collinson turned to young Dicky, and gave him a reassuring wink. Upon which, Dicky went strutting over the grass plat, brandishing his sword. I shook hands with Mrs. Knox and the girls, and, turning to salute the captain, found him gone.

"You have frightened him away, Johnny Ludlow," cried Charlotte: but she spoke in jest.

"He was already going," said Mina. "He told me he had an engagement."

"And a good thing too," spoke Mrs. Knox, crossly. "Fancy his imparting dangerous notions to Dicky!"

Dicky had just discovered our loss. He came shrieking back to know where the captain was. Gone away for good, his mother told him. Upon which young Dicky plunged into a fit of passion and kicking.

"Do you know how Lady Jenkins is to-day?" I asked of Charlotte, when Dicky's noise had been appeased by a promise of cold apple-pudding for tea.

"Not so well."

"Not so well! I had thought of her as being much better."

"I don't think her so," continued Charlotte. "Madame St. Vincent told Mina this morning that she was all right; but when I went in just now she was in bed and could hardly answer me."

"Is her cold worse?"

"No; I think that is gone, or nearly so. She seemed dazed—stupid, more so than usual."

"I certainly never saw anyone alter so greatly as Lady Jenkins has altered in the last few months," spoke Mrs. Knox. "She is not like the same woman."

"I'm sure I wish we had never gone that French journey!" said Mina. "She has never been well since.—Oh, here's Arnold!"

Dr. Knox had come straight into the garden from Jenkins House. Dicky rushed up to besiege his arms and legs; but, as Dicky was in a state of flour—which he had just put upon himself in the kitchen, or had had put upon him by the maids—the doctor ordered him to keep at arm's length; and the doctor was the only person who could make himself obeyed by Dicky.

"You have been to see Lady Jenkins, Arnold," said his step-mother. "How is she?"

"Nothing much to boast of," lightly answered Dr. Knox. "Johnny, are you ready?"

"I am going to be a soldier, Arnold," put in Dicky, dancing a kind of war-dance round him. "Captain Collinson is going to make me a captain like himself."

"All right," said Arnold. "You must grow a little bigger first."

"And, Arnold, the captain says—oh, my!" broke off Dicky, "what's this? What have I found?"

The boy stooped to pick up something glittering that had caught

his eye. It proved to be a curiously-shaped gold watch-key, with a small compass in it. Mina and Lotty both called out that it was Captain Collinson's, and must have dropped from his chain during a recent romp with Dicky.

"I'll take it in to him at Lady Jenkins's," said Dicky.

"You will do nothing of the sort, sir," corrected his mother, taking the key from him: she had been thoroughly put out by the suggestion of the "commission." "Should you chance to see the captain when you go out," she added to me, "tell him his watch-key is here."

The phæton waited outside. It was the oldest thing I ever saw in regard to fashion, and might have been in the firm hundreds of years. Its hood could be screwed up and down at will, just as the perch behind, where Thomas, the groom, generally sat, could be closed or opened. I asked Dr. Knox whether it had been built later than the year One.

"Just a little, I suppose," he answered, smiling. "This vehicle was Dockett's special aversion. He christened it the 'conveyance,' and we have mostly called it so since."

We were about to step into it, when Madame St. Vincent came tripping out of the gate up above. Dr. Knox met her.

"I was sorry not to have been in the way when you left, doctor," she said to him in a tone of apology: "I had gone to get the jelly for Lady Jenkins. Do tell me what you think of her?"

"She does not appear very lively," he answered; "but I can't find out that she is in any pain."

"I wish she would get better!—she does give me so much concern," warmly spoke Madame. "Not that I think her seriously ill, myself. I'm sure I do everything for her that I possibly can."

"Yes, yes, my dear lady, you cannot do more than you do," replied Arnold. "I will be up in better time to-morrow."

"Is Captain Collinson here?" I stayed behind Dr. Knox to ask.

"Captain Collinson here!" returned Madame St. Vincent, in a tart tone, as if the question offended her. "No, he is not. What should bring Captain Collinson here?"

"I thought he might have called in upon leaving Mrs. Knox's. I only wished to tell him that he dropped his watch-key next door. It was found on the grass."

"I don't know anything of his movements," coldly remarked Madame. And as I ran back to Dr. Knox, I remembered what Dan Jenkins had said—that she did not like the captain. And I felt Dan was right.

Dr. Knox drove home in silence, I sitting beside him, and Thomas in the perch. He looked very grave, like a man pre-occupied. In passing the railway-station, I made some remark about Miss Cattledon, who was coming by the train then on its way; but he did not appear to hear me.

Sam Jenkins ran out as we drew up at Mr. Tamlyn's gate. An urgent message had come for Dr. Knox: somebody taken ill at Cooper's—at the other end of the town.

"Mr. Tamlyn thinks you had better go straight on there at once, sir," said Sam.

"I suppose I must," replied the doctor. "It is awkward, though"—pulling out his watch. "Miss Cattledon will be due presently, and Janet wanted me to meet her," he added to me. "Would you do it, Johnny?"

"What—meet Miss Cattledon? Oh yes, certainly."

The conveyance drove on, with the doctor and Thomas. I went in-doors with Sam. Janet said I could meet her aunt just as well as Arnold, as I knew her. The brougham was brought round to the gate by the coachman, Wall, and I went away in it.

Smoothly and quietly glided in the train, and out of a first-class carriage stepped Miss Cattledon, thin and prim and upright as ever.

"Dear me! is that you, Johnny Ludlow?" was her greeting to me when I stepped up and spoke to her; and her tone was all vinegar. "What do *you* do here?"

"I came to meet you. Did you not know I was staying at Lefford?"

"I knew *that*. But why should they send you to meet me?"

"Dr. Knox was coming himself, but he has just been called out to a patient. How much luggage have you, Miss Cattledon?"

"Never you mind how much, Johnny Ludlow: my luggage does not concern you."

"But cannot I save you the trouble of looking after it? If you will get into the brougham, I will see to the luggage: and bring it on in a fly, if it's too much to go on the box with Wall."

"You mean well, Johnny Ludlow, I daresay; but I always see to my luggage myself. I should have lost it times and again, if I did not."

She went pushing about amid the porters and the trucks, and secured the luggage. One not very large black box went up by Wall; a smaller inside with us. So we drove out of the station in state, luggage and all, Cattledon holding her head bolt-upright.

"How is Janet, Johnny Ludlow?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"And those two children she has got—are they very troublesome?"

"Indeed, no; they are the best little things you ever saw. I wanted to bring the boy with me to meet you, but Janet would not let me."

"Um!" grunted Cattledon: "showed a little sense for once. What is that building?"

"That's the town hall. I thought you knew Lefford, Miss Cattledon?"

"One cannot be expected to retain the buildings of a town in one's head as if they were photographed there," returned she in a sharp tone of reproof. Which shut me up.

"And, pray, how does that young woman continue to conduct herself?" she asked presently.

"What young woman?" I said, believing she must be irreverently alluding to Janet.

"Lettice Lane."

Had she mentioned the name of some great Indian Begum I could not have been more surprised. *That* name brought back to memory all the old trouble connected with Miss Deveen's emeralds, their loss and their finding: which, take it for all in all, was nothing short of a romance. But why did she question *me* about Lettice Lane? I asked her why.

"I asked to be answered, young man," was Cattledon's grim retort.

"Yes, of course," I said with deprecation. "But how should I know anything about Lettice Lane?"

"If there's one thing I hate more than another, Johnny Ludlow, it is shuffling. I ask you how that young woman is going on; and I request you to answer me."

"Indeed I would if I could. I don't understand why you should ask me. Is Lettice Lane not living still with you—with Miss Deveen?"

Cattledon evidently thought I *was* shuffling, for she looked daggers at me. "Lettice Lane," she said, "is with Janet Knox."

"With Janet Knox! Oh dear no, she is not."

"Don't you get into a habit of contradicting your elders, Johnny Ludlow. It is very unbecoming in a young man."

"But—see here, Miss Cattledon. If Lettice were living with Janet, I must have seen her. I see the servants every day. I assure you Lettice is not one of them."

She began to see that I was in earnest, and condescended to explain in her stiff way. "Janet came to town last May to spend a week with us. Previous to that, Lettice Lane had been complaining of not feeling strong: I thought it was nothing but her restlessness; Miss Deveen and the doctor thought she wanted country air—that London did not agree with her. Janet was parting with her nurse at the time; she engaged Lettice to replace her, and brought her down to Lefford. Is the matter clear to you now, young man?"

"Quite so. But indeed, Miss Cattledon, Lettice is not with Janet now. The nurse is named Harriet, and she is not in the least like Lettice Lane."

"Then Lettice Lane must have gone roving again—unless you are mistaken," said Cattledon severely. "Wanting country air, forsooth! Change was what *she* wanted."

Handing Miss Cattledon over to the care of Janet, when we arrived, who took her upstairs, and told me tea would be ready soon, I went into Mr. Tamlyn's sitting-room. He was in the easy chair before the fire, dozing, but opened his eyes at my entrance.

"Visitor come all right, Johnny?"

"Yes, sir, she is gone to take her cloaks off. Janet says the tea is nearly ready."

"I am quite ready for it," he remarked, and shut his eyes again.

I took up a book I was reading, "Martin Chuzzlewit," and sat down on the broad window-seat, legs up, to catch the now fading light. The folds of the crimson curtain lay between me and Mr. Tamlyn—and I only hoped Mrs. Gamp would not send me into convulsions and disturb him.

But she went well-nigh to do it. Looking out of the hotel window and congratulating herself that there was a "parapege" to drop on in case of fire, sent me off. My hands were on my mouth and my shoulders silently shaking, when Dr. Knox came in. He went up to the fire, and stood at the corner of the mantel-piece, his elbow on it, his back to me; and old Tamlyn woke up.

"Well," began he, "what was the matter at Cooper's, Arnold?"

"Eldest boy fell off a ladder and broke his arm. It is but a simple fracture."

"Been very busy to day, Arnold?"

"Pretty well."

"Hope I shall be out again in a day or two. How did you find Lady Jenkins?"

"Not at all to my satisfaction. She was in bed, and—and in fact seemed hardly to know me."

Tamlyn said nothing to this, and a silence ensued. Dr. Knox broke it. He turned his eyes from the fire, on which they had been fixed, and looked full at his partner.

"Has it ever struck you that there's not quite fair play going on up there?" he asked in a low tone.

"Up where?"

"With Lady Jenkins."

"How do you mean, Arnold?"

"That something is being given to her!"

Tamlyn sat upright in his chair, pushed his scanty hair back, and stared at Dr. Knox.

"*What* do you mean, Knox? What do you suspect?"

"That she is being habitually drugged; gradually, slowly——"

"Merciful goodness!" interrupted Tamlyn, rising to his feet in excitement. "Do you mean slowly poisoned?"

"Hush!—I hear Janet," cried Dr. Knox.

And that is all I can get in here.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

ON THE CORNWALL AND DEVON COAST.

AN OUTLINE.

By Charles W. Wood.

PERHAPS few counties in England present greater contrasts than Cornwall. You may quickly pass from a dream of beauty to the most barren isolation. Round about Falmouth there are nooks and nests; small places that make up by their charms for a want of extent: whose cultivation has been the tenderest care and affection of their owners: whose very trees have been originally so ordered in the planting that if the places are comparatively small, they possess all the effect of length and breadth; and frequently more picturesqueness than many an ancestral home counting its acres by thousands.

The climate is so mild and genial that plants and trees belonging by nature to the tropics or the hothouse grow at large in the open air and cheat you into the belief that you have suddenly been transported to a Madeira, or the orange groves of some more distant island. You may see in close proximity one to another, a palm tree, the graceful waving of the Indian grass, the tall straight stalks of the bamboo, the rich flowering aloe, and rhododendron plants each nearly two hundred feet in circumference. Sloping downwards on a velvety lawn, cool and refreshing to the eye, amidst the glare of the hot sun, are other plants and flowers of gorgeous and flaming hue: the trees, so cunningly planted in bygone days, in over-shadowing bend, wave and rustle in the breeze, whispering to each other possibly of the glories of creation: whilst, beyond all, you may catch sight of a flowing river; or, most beautiful of all objects in nature—the blue, shimmering, ever changing, ever restless, yet ever restful sea.

An earthly paradise this, but not suited to all the sons of Adam, creatures of habit and influence. Whilst one will languish for the perpetual heat of an Indian summer, another sighs for the winter breezes of a Caucasus or a Chimborazo. Man never is, but always to be blest: as true a saying as it is wide-spread. Thus these exquisite spots, a very balm of Gilead to some, carry a sting to others. Day by day as you revel in the gorgeous scene, you feel a something mysteriously going out of you. A month passes, and you are not the man you were. The relaxing air is doing its work upon one who, perhaps, once breathed the atmosphere of a frozen sea. Your energies are diminishing; evaporating as subtly and silently as the scent leaves a distilled perfume. Doctors will tell you that after a time you grow accustomed to all this; the body eventually returns to its normal condition. Non e vero. And why, otherwise, should the men of the North, as a rule, be stronger, physically and mentally, than those of the South? You rise early in the South: you plunge in

the transparent sea, whose waters are so rainbow-tinted that a dip in their cool shallows becomes a greater luxury than the scented vapours of an eastern harem. But all is useless, and but puts off the evil day when the lovely but enervating influences must yield to those of a more northern, more bracing, more manly temperature: rougher it may be, less alluring and enslaving doubtless, but mentally and morally more invigorating.

There is the reverse of the picture. A short drive from these beauties will land you in the mining districts, where man's inventions have spoilt all that was once lovely in nature. They are noisy and active with men and women: working about ground or passing a large portion of their lives in semi-darkness and danger below it. Exposed to the heat of furnaces so fierce and fiery that insensibly the mind recals the history of Nebuchadnezzar and the golden image: or superintending the crushing, sifting, washing, and various processes by which the precious ore is turned into a veritable image of gold—for some: for others, alas, it has proved but an image of clay.

None of the dirt and blackness here of the coal districts of counties further north. The red earth, on the contrary, gives the landscape a warm and cheerful tinge, that a very little redeems its barren aspect —though its cheerfulness is almost as dismal and out of place as the smiles of a mute on guard. It follows that the miners, too, are red and not black. The effect they create is only the more weird and startling. The blackness of the coal-miner conceals his pallor and any little eccentricities of form or symmetry of feature wherewith nature may have endowed him. The red tinge of the Cornishman, but seems to render yet more conspicuous the pale, cadaverous hue of his countenance: from out which a pair of eyes shine forth with dull or brilliant lustre in a melancholy stare that at once appeals to your compassion. Watch them in groups, waiting for the hour to strike that sets the man-engine to work, and takes them down, one by one, to their daily tombs, and you will pity many a pale face as it disappears with a piece of candle grotesquely stuck in a lump of clay in the cap that covers the matted head. At the dinner or tea hour, they return to earth one by one, up the ladder that took them down a few hours ago.

Other spots of Cornwall again are silent for ever: a deathlike silence that makes itself felt. Shafts have been sunk here, and money too, only to bring forth ruin to some, disappointment to many. The pits are tenanted with the ghosts of departed hopes, and the atmosphere they breathe is made up of the sighs and lamentations that followed them. Here it is that the image that should have been gold has proved itself nothing but clay. The silence of these districts is eloquent. The tall chimneys are monuments of man's ingenuity, but also of the vanity and uncertainty of many a worldly scheme.

Not, however, with these, have we any concern to-day. Happily we turn our backs upon the mining districts, and the lessons they

possibly suggest. Attractive as the regions may be to lucky owners and shareholders, whose hands have held only trump cards, they possess small interest (in every sense of the word) for the greater portion of mankind.

I was staying in Cornwall with my friend Z., one of the most favoured of mortals: who might have been another Johnson to a yet unborn world, had there been at hand a second Boswell to treasure up his powers of conversation, his wonderful flow of wit and wisdom, and hand them down to posterity. It was proposed between us one bright day, and carried unanimously (there were but two to vote, and we returned each other) that we should take a drive through the north coast of Cornwall and part of Devonshire. At once we proceeded to mature our plans: deciding to drive the whole way from Falmouth; take the horses each day a stage of twenty miles or so; and thus gradually make progress through the counties.

But on consideration this first arrangement was met by difficulties. Z. wished to be back by a certain date to fulfil sundry engagements; for, like all great men, he is in constant request. To drive the whole way from Falmouth would take up more than our allotted fortnight, and a portion of our route must be abandoned. This was not to be thought of if by any means it could be avoided. Then the horses might possibly knock up, and in that case where should we be? Again, the coachman might often be at fault as to the right road to take, or the best road when there was a choice of two: an alternative that would inevitably cause the lot to fall to the wrong one. It is troublesome, too, to pore over a map every time you come to a spot where four roads meet. The carriage halts, and as a mysterious shiver creeps through your veins you bethink yourself of bygone days and customs, and wonder what unhappy being was buried there at dead of night, with a torch to render more hideous the ghastly preparations, and more conspicuous the absence of Christian rites. How often at these cross roads the sign-post that should be there is illegible or altogether missing, let those testify who have had occasion to refer to them. For my own part I put little faith in sign-posts, and never felt the slightest regard for any save one, and that for its Irish humour. It ran as follows:—"This road to Marcastle. Those who cannot read to apply at the blacksmith's forge over the way."

But this sign-post was not in Cornwall, dear reader, whither let us return.

We decided to abandon our first intention of driving at once from our starting-point. Time would be gained, and more seen, by taking train in one or two instances: and in all others posting the various stages that might constitute our day's journey. And the comfort, independence, freedom from risk, and additional ground we went over, fully atoned for the increased expenditure.

At the last moment, our friend A. agreed to accompany us. Being a member of the gentler sex and one of the sunniest of her kind—

the fairer portion of Creation—our happiness was now complete. A., also, delighted to sit at the feet of Z.—our modern Gamaliel—and listen to the wise saws and modern instances, the sage aphorisms, the wit and wisdom, fun and humour, gravity and gaiety, that chased each other in moods like the lights and shades of a broken sky, and fell from his lips in brilliant flashes, turning miles into acres and days into hours.

We started one Monday morning. Our final destination that first day was to be Boscastle, whose wonders we had never seen. The weather favoured us to begin with: an all-important consideration. Our first stage was Bodmin, a distance of some forty miles, to be done by train. It led us through a very different district from the mining territories of Redruth and its neighbourhood: now taking us over a lofty viaduct that dwarfed trees, houses, and churches; now down into a valley, rich with verdure, and smiling banks, and laughing streams; now past the important town of Truro, daily gaining in the starched atmosphere that generally accompanies the ecclesiastical dignity of a cathedral town; and now beyond the once picturesque St. Austell, that rests (one can hardly say reposes) on a hill-side to the right, and is chiefly remarkable for its fine church, and for once having been captured by King Charles I. of royal and unhappy memory.

At Bodmin station we left the train for the coach that was to take us to Bodmin town, a distance of between three and four miles. The change was for the better. What can be more exhilarating, more bracing to the nerves, than dashing at the speed of four horses up hill and down dale, through fine scenery, on the sunniest of days? Few enjoyments in this lower world. The drive between the station and the town is one of the prettiest in Cornwall. On the one side, high banks crowned with hedges; on the other, to the right, richly wooded slopes terminating in a valley, exhibiting every shade of green, to-day intermixed with the tints of approaching autumn. These richly wooded banks are also the special feature of the Fal, lying between Falmouth and Truro; an unbroken carpet of waving leaves on either side, far as the winding river will carry the eye, whilst each bend opens up a continuance of this surprising wealth, broken here and there to give view to some country house that adds life and variety to the charming scene. On the road to Bodmin, however, the hedges and the wooded slopes gave place to a more level country and open road: until, when one had just begun to get into the spirit of the drive, the coach dashed into the primitive little town.

At Bodmin we stayed only long enough for the good people of the inn to get ready a carriage and horses, for which we exchanged the more dashing coach and four. There is little to see in the town, which is chiefly interesting from its associations with the past. The parish church is said to be the largest in Cornwall. As we left the town we were struck with the immense size of the County Lunatic Asylum, and if it is always full—as we were told—it is a consolation

to think that in Cornwall, at any rate, there can be few lunatics at large.

The distance from Bodmin to Boscastle is twenty miles. It is curious that every noted place in this part of the country seems to be twenty miles distant, one from the other: so that each day's journey became to us a twenty-mile stage. The road to-day lay through a country flat and uninteresting. Not one feature worthy of remark was passed on the journey. The landscape was bare of trees, and looked sufficiently bleak and barren in consequence. Here and there the country opened up in great extent, showing a distant village with

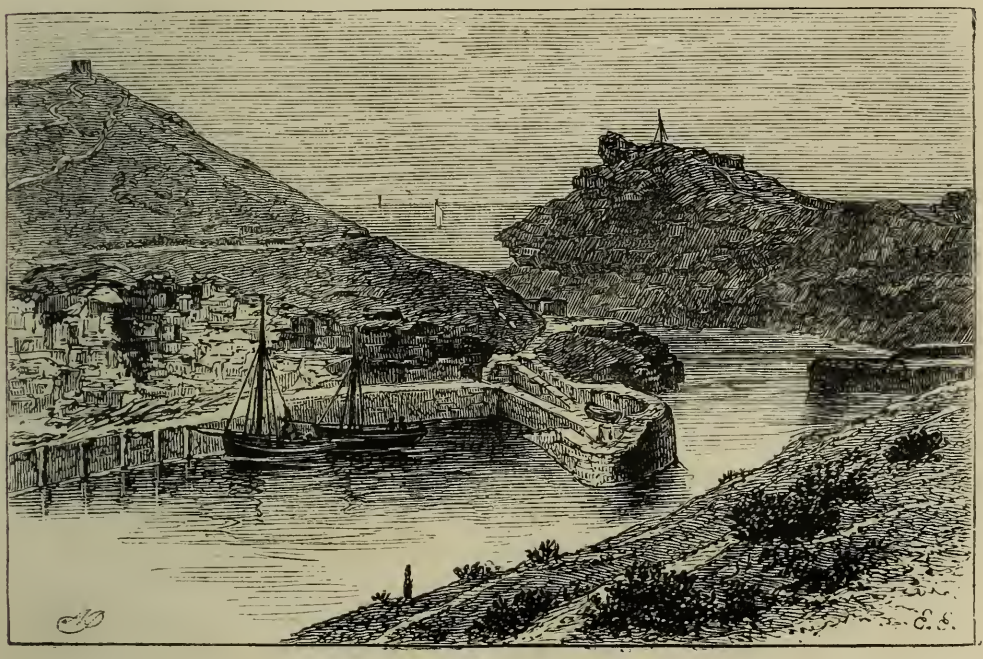
THE OLD MILL, BOSCASTLE.

its accompanying church spire or tower. Nevertheless, the drive, as we went rapidly through the air, was enjoyable; whilst Z. by his wit and humour, made up for the deficiencies of the landscape.

At length we approached Boscastle, and began the wonderful descent that leads to the village and the inn. Here the scene was entirely changed. In the hollow, shielded from bleak winds, trees and plants grew in wild beauty. Few things in England will compare with this descent, the more startling from the violent contrast it presents to the flat, dull road lately traversed. It is full of picturesqueness: un-English in its aspect, and reminding one rather of some portion of a German or Tyrolese pass. It is romantic in the extreme. Winding round the road, which is almost precipitous, your

excitement gathers, if you are susceptible to these influences, whilst you take in all the surrounding points; note the picturesque cottages dotted about in charming irregularity on the slopes; and listen to the sounds of village life mingling with the noise of a running stream and the splash of a water-wheel: and, on a rough day, the roar of the sea beyond. Years ago this must have been one of the most secluded spots in the world, leading from nowhere and to nowhere: but now, though still primitive, it has lost the charm of seclusion.

The carriage continued its downward road, steep and rapid, embowered in trees and verdure growing on the precipitous slopes, and terminating in a narrow ravine or defile. Here we reached the bottom and the inn together. We had travelled that day between



BOSCASTLE HARBOUR.

sixty and seventy miles, and the sensation of enjoyment in going down this remarkable approach would have well repaid a journey of double the length.

At Boscastle we found one of the best and most comfortable inns in Cornwall. Quiet, well managed, clean and neat to perfection, and moderate in its charges. An excellent sitting-room was given to us, and if the bedrooms were small, they were perhaps the more enjoyable on that account. Mine looked on to an old water-mill; and in the dead of night, when the moon shone down upon the silent world, broken only by the noise of the running stream, the scene was one that might well banish slumber.

Having satisfactorily settled our foothold in the inn, we issued forth to reconnoitre and inspect the land. The scene in this cleft

or ravine was wild and beautiful. Before us was the picturesque old water-mill, its creaking wheel turned by the stream that came dashing down the valley on its way to the sea. Beyond, were the rocky heights that shut out the sea from view. To the left the narrow cleft gradually widened until it gave room for the small, quaint, miniature harbour, cunningly constructed to break the force of the waves, and capable of holding a very few vessels.

On our way to the top of the cliffs, overlooking the sea, we passed a few cottages on the right, where visitors may obtain lodgings during the summer months, if willing to put up with scanty accommodation for the sake of the wild surrounding scenery. A gradual but tolerably rough ascent led us to the summit of the rocks overhanging the sea. Here indeed the wide extent of ocean suddenly burst upon us, and the magnificent outline of rocky coast. To the left was Willapark Point, crowned by a low tower and separated from us by the entrance to the harbour. The sea was bathed in the glow of sunset, and in the distance Lundy Island, with its blue surface, reposed in a golden haze, looking as calm and quiet as if it had been a thousand leagues from the rest of the world.

There was something unusually striking and impressive in passing suddenly from the confined and picturesque ravine to the full sweep of ocean in all its unlimited extent. We sat long, noting every shade of change in sky and water: gleams of light and colour rapid in their movements as the fitful flashings of a northern light, and as beautiful: until twilight began to fall and we bethought ourselves of rough stones, and holes in the rocks, that lay in our downward path, and were snares and pitfalls to at least one of our party. Besides all this "feast of reason and flow of soul," represented by the beauties of nature, another feast had to be encountered, less æsthetical in its properties, perhaps, but not the less necessary on that account. To this, as to many other duties in life, delay was dangerous. Consulting our watches, we hastened our steps with the fear of the hotel cook before our eyes—who was probably a feminine cordon bleu, and only the more to be dreaded: whilst stumblings and little jumps from one point to another, that made Z. as frisky as a young gazelle, though perhaps not quite so graceful, and narrow escapes from rolling-stones, that threatened to bring our mortal career to an abrupt and tragic ending, landed us at last at the inn door, in a state of breathless thanksgiving and fervent congratulations.

The next morning we started with all the dignity of an open landau and a pair of fine horses, for Crackington Cove, and Tintagel Castle, intending to visit the Delabole slate quarries by the way. Our road lay upwards through the fine descent of last night, and, this passed, so also was the most romantic portion of the scenery. From the High Cliff we obtained a magnificent view of the Bristol Channel, and of a few ships gliding by in the distance in full sail. Here, in spite

of the grandeur of the view, we did not linger, but continued our way to Crackington.

The road lay with the sea to our left hand, and though the outline of coast was not always visible, the drive was sufficiently picturesque to be interesting: and even grand so far as the sea was concerned. At Crackington Cove it was really a magnificent and exhilarating sight. The tide was coming in, and every advancing wave rushed with tremendous force, in rich white foam, over a flat bed of slatey rock: dashing the spray around, and hissing and seething with a loud, wild sound. Then the foaming water receded rapidly, leaving the rocky bed uncovered for many yards, until the next advancing wave once more came rushing and rolling up between the wide aperture in the cliffs. It was one of the grandest sights possible, and we found it difficult to move away from it. But other things had to be done that day, and we continued our journey to the quarries of Delabole: the sea now to our right hand.

No one who finds himself in this neighbourhood should omit visiting the quarries. They are a grand and surprising sight from their very magnitude and extent. The excavations are of immense depth and breadth: so deep indeed that the men working at the bottom were almost difficult to distinguish. Others at work on the sides, seemed to hang on like flies, for the ledges on which they stood were too narrow to be seen. Small waggons or trucks are let down upon rails, and are drawn up in like manner by machinery: the former gaining great speed before they reach the bottom. They convey the slate to the surface, and the men to and fro.

One of the men, who took me over a portion of the works—Z. and A. preferred to seat themselves in dignified elevation on a mound, and survey it all at a respectful distance; even then affecting vertigo as they looked downwards—implored me to travel to the bottom in one of these trucks and upwards in like manner, "for the sake of the sensation." But I knew that Z. and A. with all their goodnature and patience, which was never equalled by anything but Balaam's mule, would be tired of their dignified elevation: whilst their horses might give up waiting altogether and continue their way to Tintagel on their own account. The "sensation" was therefore deferred to a more favourable opportunity. The quarries are many hundred feet in depth, as was evident enough; are said to produce the best slates in the kingdom, and are of very great antiquity. They give occupation to several hundred men. Now and then, by accident or carelessness, needs must that a life is lost: but the wholesale destruction that sometimes takes place in a coal mine is here absent.

This is one of the pleasant features of the quarry, making it far more agreeable than a visit to a coal mine: it is all free, open, and light. Indeed, after visiting various mines in different parts of England, I have come to the conclusion that going down a mine for pleasure is a great mistake. The pleasure is imaginary: the feeling

of suffocation, the groping about in dirt, water, and mud, the relief of a return to earth and fresh air : all this is real : whilst the whole thing is accompanied by a certain amount of danger, for which no adequate instruction, gratification or compensation has been gained.

Some years ago I went down a salt mine in Austria. I remembered reading a fairy tale in those happy days of childhood, which come but once in a lifetime, about a salt mine, where passages and floors were white as snow, and pillars and arches and vaulted roofs extended for miles all glistening and sparkling like diamonds. I expected to find all this, but, in place, beheld blackness and darkness, and oppressive solitude : a slide down an inclined plane, so prolonged that I expected to land in an inferno more horrible than Dante's : a

BUDE.

damp, hurried, briny atmosphere suggestive ot buried centuries and cities—Herculaneum and Pompeii at their worst—but of nothing present or earthly. I know not if all the salt mines resemble this one, which lies on the road, or rather very far *under* the road between Salzburg and Berchtesgaden. But with such glorious scenery as these places afford above ground, it is a wonder how anyone can be found to dive into the bowels of the earth in search of fresh distractions. Distractions indeed.

We continued our way to Tintagel. The drive, without possessing any very remarkable feature, was pleasant to a degree : now passing through roads bordered with hedges, now turning into a more open country, and now catching a view of the calm blue sea and the rocky coast. At Tintagel we put up at the inn, which appeared a place in which one might be very comfortable for more than a few hours.

Luncheon ordered, A. and I sallied forth in search of the Castle. Z., never a very good hand at climbing—we once got him up to the Rocking Stone on the south coast, and he would be rocking there still if we had not used arbitrary measures—preferred to see the Castle with his ears rather than his eyes. We left him, therefore, the picture of contented resignation, luxuriously ensconced in the cushions of an easy chair. On our return he was looking very wise and solemn over a pocket edition of Paley's "Evidences" or the Hebrew Testament—I forget which. But upon glancing over his shoulder I perceived the book was upside down: an "evidence" that Z. had certainly been napping.

But to proceed to the Castle, or we shall never get there. It was

CLOVELLY.

a comparatively short but very rough walk from the inn. The key was obtained at a cottage about half way down, the roof of which was almost level with the road. We soon reached the commencement of the ascent of the ruins. It was indeed a rough bit of climbing. In some parts rude steps were cut out of the rock, other steep paths threatened a loss of balance and a fall down jagged precipices. At length we reached the door, whose open sesame we had obtained at the cottage, passed through, and gained the summit. Great was the reward. The ruins perched on the top of this high rock were picturesque, but of gloomy and solitary aspect, their dark walls bare of all moss and lichen, for which they are no doubt too exposed. There was a great charm about the ruins; so difficult of access, so far from any habitation, in their proud seclusion seeming to command the sea that stretches on either side.

The outline of rocky coast is magnificent, and the huge detached rocks rising out of the water, added to the boldness, variety, and imposing grandeur of the scene. Against these the swell of the Atlantic broke in rich white foam. A portion of the castle is detached from the main building, and stands on a separate piece of rock, a deep chasm dividing what once was evidently connected, probably by a drawbridge. The castle is of such ancient date that its origin is unknown. Tradition says that it was once inhabited by King Arthur of the Round Table. Certainly the noble monarch could scarce have found a nobler habitation. As the rich breezes blew around, so invigorating after the soft air of the valley, it was possible to imagine that in days gone by they had inspired Arthur to many of the noble and chivalrous deeds attributed to him by history or romance.

But we could not linger too long, and reluctantly turned earthwards —this was something above earth. The descent proved more difficult than the ascent; possessed more danger and therefore gave rise to more fun. A slip from A. of just an inch and a half, followed by a piercing scream, and a positive assertion that she was about to precipitate headlong into the seething gulf. No such terrible calamity occurring, we found ourselves in due time back at the inn; ready for lunch, which, spread on a snow-white cloth, awaited our pleasure. Z., as I have remarked, was looking wise over Paley turned upside down. But on our entrance Paley was banished: and, with every desire to be respectful to a book all men must value, Z., upon the disappearance of the volume, at once proceeded to treat us to his usual flow of wit, that, if not more convincing than arguments, was certainly more entertaining.

On our way back to Boscastle we halted to enable us to visit the waterfall at St. Nighton's Keive. Z., as usual, remained in the carriage. It was a long and troublesome walk. Past a woodman's cottage, across the narrowest of planks spanning a stream, through brake and briar, and over rough paths, marshy pitfalls, and difficult stiles: difficult at least to A: who could not see—and of course could not be told—that it afforded her an opportunity of exhibiting the prettiest of feet and ankles. When we returned to Z. we thought he had had the best of it. The walk had afforded us no better view, no greater gratification than we continually received as we drove along the road, without the trouble of exertion. But, looking back upon that day when our drive through Cornwall was a thing of the past, we all felt and agreed that it had been one of the pleasantest of all our experiences.

The next day, bearing in mind that we had a certain amount of work before us to be done in a given time, we reluctantly left some of the beauties of Boscastle unexplored, and entered upon our next stage—Bude. Our Gaius himself took the reins, and informed us that he trusted that pair of horses to no hands but his own. They

certainly did credit to his masterly driving. Like his inn, and every thing about it, they were in excellent condition. Once more in point of landscape beauty there is little to record. The walk along the coast between Boscastle and Bude, is much finer than the drive through the country. In that walk you may revel as much as you please in all the fine headlands and points that open out to your delighted gaze. But in the drive we obtained only occasional glimpses of the sea and the coast, so far tantalizing that, like Oliver, we cried for more. At length we reached Bude: and in Bude, so much quoted, so often praised, we were disappointed. The coast in the immediate neighbourhood was flat, shelving down to the sands that, though white, were soft and difficult to walk upon. We saw so little to detain us that we should have continued our journey on to Clovelly; but, on returning to the inn we were told that no carriage could be procured until the next morning. Thus check-mated, we made the best of it, and reconciled ourselves to a night in Bude. It was perhaps as well. A drive of twenty miles is sufficient for one day's comfortable enjoyment. Before the second twenty are ended, you are cramped and weary, the drive has ceased to be exhilarating and a pleasure. Nor do you take up "the thread" of your journey the next day or the following with as much zest as heretofore.

Though our stay in Bude was prolonged beyond our desire, we failed to discover any new or special point of beauty to carry away with us as a pleasant reminiscence. True, we did not wander far from the haven. The air seemed particularly soft and relaxing. It was a tame, essentially calm and placid spot; full of rest and repose in its quietness, and, as it seemed, little frequented. The coast, shelving down to the beach, was tame also. Even the sea, in its blue extent, unbroken by a wave or ripple this afternoon, seemed to catch the prevailing spirit. It was difficult to fancy that it ever roared in anger, or surged in restless beating. True, the grass was of an emerald green, and the sands were of dazzling whiteness, and so we came to the conclusion that the most characteristic feature of Bude was that of contrast. Not rich and violent, as in wild spots where you get an accumulation of light and shade, and intensely rarified atmosphere, hills and valleys falling in abrupt outlines, or long-drawn undulations, now of the deepest purple and now the most vivid green. It was something much milder than all this: and Bude might be distinguished as a *quiet* contrast. After all, a recommendation not to be lightly esteemed in these days.

We left early the next morning for Clovelly. The drive was more picturesque and diversified than that of yesterday. As we advanced, the beauties of Devonshire gradually expanded. The difference between the two counties quickly made itself felt. Greater luxuriance of verdure; wayside hedges full and abundant; hills and slopes richly wooded. This became more apparent as we neared Clovelly.

At length an avenue or grove of trees, a somewhat rapid descent,

and the carriage came to a standstill: simply because the road became too steep and narrow to admit of a conveyance.

"But," said Z. in alarm, who would never walk a step if he could avoid it, "where's the village? not a house, not a creature to be seen. You were to take us to Clovelly, and you land us in the midst of a wood."

CLOVELLY.

Nevertheless we alighted. In a few minutes, down a steep and winding path, heights of rich verdure-above and around, the sea before and below us, we had reached the small, primitive New Inn that gives shelter to those who visit what has been called the most beautiful and romantic village in England: and is beyond all doubt one of the most curious and remarkable.

(To be continued.)

DREAMLAND. A LAST SKETCH.

By Julia Kavanagh.

THERE is an old, a very old and beautiful simile which we are all familiar with. I do not suppose anyone knows who first ventured upon it, or to which special poet or philosopher it belongs. In truth, it is so trite that neither dead nor living would care to claim it. I confess I like it, as I like many old-fashioned things. It is simply this: life is a mountain up which the traveller must climb. The path is rugged and sharp, but the summit must be reached. In youth we go up hill, ardent, joyous, and imagining a wonderful world beyond that steep peak in the blue sky. As we reach it, panting and rather worn with the journey, our ardour flags, and so does hope. We begin to suspect that down hill may be like up hill, worse perhaps and without the enchantment of desire to lure us on. When we stand on the top-most crag we plant our flag and cry hurrah! But are we so glad, so very glad, after all? I doubt it. There are sharp winds up there; snow hides in the clefts; it is evening, too, grey evening, lone and chill; the darkness deepens around us as we go down, and at the foot of the mountain black night lies in wait for us. Some divine heavenly stars pierce that gloom, and we know that a pure morning and a glorious day lie beyond it, but we also know that to reach these we must pass through the night, and I have found no heart, howsoever brave, whom that thought did not appal!

Very few people say so, however. It is amazing how limited is the number of men and women who fear death. A week ago I was in a village by the seaside. Cholera suddenly appeared amongst us, and monster like, devoured a few victims. Everyone packed up and fled, some in the grey morning, some in the night, but no one acknowledged fear; business, the weather, &c., &c., summoned them all away, and cholera had nothing to do with their departure. Be it so. I confess I felt extremely uneasy, and though I took my three days to pack—I am a methodical old maid, and cannot do with less—I, too, left, only I never denied my real motive for doing so; to that bravery, such as it is, I lay claim. But to return to my simile.

For the last few years I have been on the top of the mountain: that is to say, I know exactly the down-hill road which lies before me, and take no delight in the prospect. Far pleasanter do I find it to look back upon the road which brought me up here. How calm, how sunny were the early hours of that long ascent. No wonder that in all autobiography so large a space is given to child-hood. Its few years generally fill pages, whereas lines are often made to comprise the events of later life. The writer who has lingered over the loss of a tame bird, and if you are at all tender-

hearted, made you shed foolish tears thereby, tells you in a breath that he married a charming girl, lost her at the end of seven years, and took a second wife when he was out of mourning. I believe that is one of the reasons why I shun reading all such productions unless they relate to great public events, dramas of history, and so forth. They sadden me dreadfully; I like novels a great deal better.

My first were fairy tales, of course. The very spot where I read them is delightful to remember. My parents were poor, or thought themselves so, and accordingly carried their poverty to the Continent, as was the fashion of those remote times. They took up their abode in a quaint little French town, half town, half village, which lay hidden in a nook of the Norman coast, and there spent years, always talking of a going home which came not. My father was a great sportsman, and game was abundant in our neighbourhood. My dear mother hated change, and I believe liked dating her letters from the Château de Gravilles; so, what with game, cheapness, and a little innocent vanity, we made ourselves a new home and were forgotten in the old one.

Gravilles was a dear old place. It had one long sunny street with stone houses, all unlike each other, but all deliciously uncomfortable. I thought them mansions in those days, and the rickety old château we lived in, with its dingy rooms, its court, its garden and orchard was a palace in my eyes. In one of its upper rooms on a sunny May morning, with birds singing in the garden below, and the green boughs of a young poplar quivering close to the open window, I read my first fairy tale. Blessed be the day, the spot, and the hour. The story was "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," poetry, love, and romance all in one. Well, I maintain it without fear, there is nothing like fairy tales They are just enough like life to attract, for they deal with men and women, and they are too unlike it not to charm for ever. Here are no oppressed innocents sinking hopelessly under the weight of their sorrows; no triumphant wrongdoers for whom retribution shall be put off till the next world. We can take up a fairy tale in most delightful security concerning its ending, and perhaps its great attraction is that it never disappoints or deceives us. The brutal giant is always conquered, the malicious fairy is always defeated, the innocent beauty is always delivered, and the brave knight or chivalrous young prince is ever blest in love and war.

How far it may be wise to present such views of life to little men and women I cannot say. I am an old maid, and know nothing about children, or rather about education; but I do not mind confessing that I fell desperately in love with the prince who woke the sleeping beauty. I daresay I should have identified myself with that persecuted young princess if I could at all have fancied myself sleeping for so many summers and winters, but that was out of the question. I was a lively, wakeful child, and that

long nap was a little too much for me. Besides, I was fair-haired and fickle, and soon forgot the prince for another, the lover of Cinderella. These princes are all so much alike, all so young, so handsome, so chivalrous, and so faithful, that it really is not easy, especially for a young inexperienced person, to know one from the other. I confess their identity bewildered me, and I am afraid to add that I was in love with them all.

My brother John liked the princesses, but was not a bit more faithful to them than I was to the princes. Each had her turn, however, till Cinderella came and ruled them all with her little glass slipper. Dear John! He reminded me of that time in his last letter: the letter he wrote to me the night before his ship was lost on the Irish coast. Oh! how strange and dreary it was to read, "Do you remember Cinderella?" and to know that the young hand which had traced these words was lying cold and nerveless fathoms deep in the pitiless sea.

My father never recovered the blow, and from that day forth my dear, gentle mother became fretful and irritable. I was seventeen then, and was left to myself and to my grief. The grief I survived, but my own companionship left some deep traces in my life.

I had entered Fairyland in childhood, and I am not at all certain that this pleasant country is the right place for youths; but very sure am I that Dreamland, which had my next visit, is the last spot I would take my daughter to, if I had one, which, being an old maid, is not the case, you see. But the worst of Dreamland is that no one takes you to it. You go to it of your own accord, and its boundaries are so fine that they are crossed before you know anything about it. Some people have never visited that country, they say, but that I deny. To think of the future is to go to Dreamland straight.

Well, few people can lead long lives, I suppose, and not look back to the past and read there with some wonder how they imagined that their future which has since become another past. These two are so unlike, you see: the imagination and the fulfilment. The sorrows are never those we dreaded; no more than the blessings are those we longed and prayed for. For my part I very well remember the time when twenty-five was to be the vanishing point of my little perspective of a life. Beyond these remote years I did not go. This goal was to be my resting place. Between that and the eighteen of my dreaming I placed events, adventures, sorrows and joys more than I could number. These seven years were a long gallery with niches on either side, and every niche had its story. There was the niche of love, of course, and the niche of vainglory, and the niche of sacrifice and that of sorrow; and in the last of all I saw myself sitting, a calm worn woman of twenty-five, looking at life with folded hands and pitying eyes, and a heart set on the better world and the better part. After reaching this bourne I was to enter a sort of spiritual monastery. I accordingly closed its gates upon

myself, and did not even seek to imagine what kind of a life I might lead behind them. I doubt if youth ever really conceives age. To me I know that wrinkles and silver hair were dimly remote: I could not go beyond twenty-five.

Now, of course, all this seems very absurd, and yet there was but one folly in it: I was in too great a hurry. My conception of a life was a pretty true one; but I mistook the proportions in which all these things were to come to pass. Most of the niches I had filled up remained vacant, or very nearly so, but other niches unsuspected by poor me appeared as I went on my journey. The niche of love was inexorably closed, and that of money cares most unexpectedly opened. Some other mistakes I found that I had committed. For instance, twenty-five, instead of a resting place, proved the threshold of a life. I was never more restless than at that time, which I had fancied so serene and so calm. Indeed, finding that I had been all wrong, and that this was not the goal of life, I gently pushed it back to thirty, and built another gallery more sober and with fewer niches in it than the first. And were they filled?—never. Troubles which I had not conceived came and took hold of me. My dreams, not very rosy ones, however, melted one by one before the chill breath of life. And thirty found me contented enough, and happy enough too; but oh! how unlike the woman of twenty-five whom the girl of eighteen had imagined.

What that woman is now matters very little. I have ceased to look forward, and I take life as a sort of daily bread; but sometimes I cannot help sighing when I look back and think of my shortcomings. For you see I was young, and I worshipped heroism and goodness in those days; and being a vain and silly creature, as most girls are, I made a pretty little image of myself and set it up for domestic adoration. I was to be generous, oh! so generous. I was to be good, not in a foolish common-place sort of way, but after a noble fashion. Then I was to be heroic. Not that I was to do such wonderful things—I had a grain of sense left—but great duties, or great sufferings, or great trials were to come in my way, and I was to take and accept them grandly. To go amongst the heathen, be tied to a stake and die singing God's praises with the flames rising around me, would have been the very summit of my ambition if I could have looked so high; but to be candid, I could not—I was afraid of the fire. Some other things, however, I felt quite equal to. We all know how Pœtus, fearing to die, was addressed by his wife, Arria: how she stabbed herself, then handed him the knife, and uttered the memorable words, "Pœtus, it does not hurt." Well, that I could have managed very well. I will venture to say that it was quite in my way, only we have no tyrants now-a-days who compel us to commit suicide. I had also my doubts about Pœtus. He was weak and pusillanimous, and was it needful that I should kill myself in order to set him an example. I only

mention this instance to give the standard of my heroism. It was equal to death, to a noble one of course, but not to pain.

Now if any giggling schoolgirl reads this, I know what she thinks of me. I know she thinks she is not and never could be so foolish. That may be, child; you live in a wiser age than was mine, and as your age is so you are—a coolheaded young lady who talks slang and scorns romance. That may be, child, that may be; but I will tell you what you do and what I never did. You build up your little castle in the air about Mr. Johnson. He half squeezed your hand last night, and forthwith you are arrayed in white, and the orange-blossom nods on your brow, and you are spending your honeymoon by the lakes. My dear child, better dream of being Arria or Joan of Arc herself than this. You see when dreams belong wholly to Dreamland they lose half their mischievous power. Of course they are very foolish, and a terrible loss of time, but they have this great salve—they lead to nothing. The dream which weaves itself around reality, in which, with time, reality gets so blended that the dreamer cannot well tell which is which, is purely and simply pestilential. That grain of sense to which I have alluded, and a spark of prudence with it, saved me from this. Of course I too had my temptations, and sometimes they took the fascinating aspect of Mr. Johnson, and sometimes they did not. But no sooner did my careless foot tread on this serpent than I started back amazed and frightened. I would have fallen in love with Pœtus himself, though he was but a poor thing, rather than indulge in so dangerous a pastime. It was all very well to play with fancy in her fair Eden, but I knew it would never do to treat these flowery plains as if they were this firm stony earth of ours. I knew a dream was a dream, so, though Mr. Johnson did squeeze my hand sometimes—and he did, whatever you may think—I looked at him with a prudent eye, and made no god of that young gentleman; and perhaps that was why my niche of love was never filled up, but remained cold and vacant. Once indeed—but I shall say naught about that now, it having nothing to do with Dreamland.

I do not mean to add much concerning my sojourn in that country. My excursions to it grew fewer as years crept upon me, and have now ceased entirely. Sometimes I try to go back to that pleasant region, but I cannot. Formerly it was all clear and open: a word, a look, a line in a book, a cloud in the sky would take me to it, swift as the wing of any bird. Now all that is altered. A thorny forest lies between Dreamland and me, and beyond that I know that there are heavy iron gates locked and barred—gates which are ever closed on faded faces and white locks. There is no help for it; the evil, if evil it be, must be borne patiently; but when the sense of my powerlessness presses upon me, when I feel that never again must I indulge in folly, but am doomed to wisdom, I think of dear John, who went down with his Dreamland full upon him.

A TOMB IN A FOREIGN LAND.

By the Author of "East Lynne."

I.

HAD they been on the parched, arid shores of India, with all the force of its burning sun concentrated on their heads, the heat could scarcely have been more intense. There was no place to turn to for shade; no green spot on which the aching eye could rest: the glare was unbroken and terrible, as it always is there in the brilliant days of summer. The town itself, with its white houses, was anything but grateful to the sight, and though the sky was blue, to that the eye could not raise itself through the universal glare. The sands burnt with heat; the rays of the sun recoiled from the white bathing-machines; the sea glittered to the eye only in an inferior degree to the white sails of the vessels passing up the Channel; and on the water in the harbour the eye dared not and could not rest, for it was like gazing on molten gold, destroying the sight it dazzled.

On the terrace at the Etablissement des Bains, or, as it is often styled, the casino, sat a bevy of girls of various lands—for crowds of many nations flock in summer to that gay watering-place. They were idly gossiping away the mid-day heat, and longing for the cool of night, and for the dancing it would bring—that they might make themselves hot again. Near to one of the doors opening to the large room sat an English girl. Not tall, but stately as the young American at her side; dreamy and imaginative as the Italian before her; calm and self-possessed as the West Indian, who stood making marks with her parasol upon the gravel beneath; graceful and easy as were the French; and beautiful, as befitted her birthplace, was this English maiden. Listless enough the group all seemed, save the French, who, as usual, were chattering and gesticulating away. She held a newspaper, this English girl, and glanced at its pages from time to time.

"Have you anything interesting there?" inquired one of the French girls.

"No," was the reply of Miss Chard, raising her eyes from the journal, and offering it to the fair questioner.

"Ah bah! merci to you, mademoiselle, all the same, but I never touch a newspaper," answered the coquettish Gaul.

"The *Débats!*" remarked the haughty West Indian. "You are fond of politics possibly, Miss Chard; the English mostly are."

"England's men," broke in the American lady, "but not its females, I think. Their minds are not formed for grave thought; their talents are not equal to it."

A quiet, proud smile sat on the beautiful lip of the English girl,

though politics were as a sealed book to her. One of the French hastened to speak.

"Ma foi! but the English have talents—talents and pride. Though in all the social conditions of life—a ball-room, for instance, or a morning visit—you might just as well see so many dancing bears."

As she spoke, a gentleman stepped out upon the terrace from the rooms, and the prevailing listlessness was gone. A tall, slender man with one of those beautiful faces often sung of but seldom seen; features exquisitely chiselled and pale almost to a fault. It was impossible, when looking on his courtly mien and dignified bearing, to mistake him for anything but an English *gentleman;* and a vain consciousness of his own attractions might be read in his sleepy eye. Glances of admiration stole towards him, but he seated himself by the side of the young English lady: and her eyes were bent upon the ground, whilst the crimson flush of love rose to her features. His name was Ravensburg.

"I have been to your house, Lucy," he said, in a whisper: "I thought the heat would have kept you at home. Pardon, mademoiselle," he continued, picking up the handkerchief which one of the French girls dropped in passing him.

The curtseying Gaul, self-possessed from her infancy, with more apologies and bows than an Englishwoman would make in a month, received, as she expected, the property which the handsome young Englishman tendered her, and the conversation became general.

"Who is that?" exclaimed the West Indian, directing their attention to a fresh comer, who now appeared upon the scene—a young lady seemingly not more than eighteen or nineteen.

"How very beautiful!" exclaimed Mr. Ravensburg.

"She is too tall: and so very pale!" dissented one of the French girls.

"But look at her features!" cried the Indian. "Did you ever see such, save in sculpture? and then you have not the colouring."

"It is the Baroness de Laca," observed the American. "She is a widow."

"A widow? Nonsense!" said Mr. Ravensburg. "She is a mere girl."

"A widow for all that," continued the young American, decisively. "They marry in Spain when they are little better than infants; though *she* was chiefly reared in England, her parents having adopted your country for their own. They are with her here. We were introduced to them last night. She is very rich, and, it is said, very wilful."

"And very fascinating," continued Mr. Ravensburg, eagerly watching the graceful figure of the Spaniard as it retired from view.

"Smitten!" laughed the West Indian, a smile of mockery on her lip.

The gentleman laughed in return—a laugh as shallow as her own. "Not smitten so easily as you imagine, fair lady."

Lucy Chard raised her eyes, and saw, standing opposite to her on the lower terrace, a singular-looking man. His dress might have befitted some remote Indian prince, or—a member of that fraternity, the "Swell-Mob." Chains, rings, watchguards, seals, studs and diamond-pins shone conspicuously all over him. His looks were of that style that is sometimes mistaken for beauty. What a complexion was his! the lily blending with the carnation-rose; teeth even, and white as ivory—so white and even that a certain doubt might arise in the mind of a bystander; his handsome features (the nose alone an exception to the adjective, and *that* turned up to the skies) were ornamented by a profusion of jet-black ringlets, whiskers, and a fierce moustache. His figure was about the middle height, portly and upright, and his age uncertain. He held in his hand a small hunting-whip, its handle set in gold, or some metal that looked like it, tapping the tip of his highly-varnished boot, and fixing his bold eyes with a stare of admiration on Lucy Chard. She rose from her seat.

"Francis, I think mamma must be waiting for me."

"Do you know that man, Lucy?" he inquired.

"Not at all," she replied, a supercilious gesture of the eyelids darting involuntarily towards the stranger. Mr. Ravensburg eyed him attentively; but Lucy was waiting, and he drew her hand within his arm, lifting his hat to the party they were leaving.

"How vain the British are!" exclaimed the American girl, gazing after Mr. Ravensburg's receding form; "and he exemplifies the national failing."

"She has the greater vanity, that Miss Chard," rejoined the West Indian, "to think she can secure the whole attention of such a man. *He* constant to one, indeed!"

"That Spanish girl can hear all we are saying. What brings her so near?"

"She drew up when they left; as if she would watch the departure of Mr. Ravensburg."

The carriage of Mrs Chard waited round at the outer entrance, and that lady, having scanned all the newspapers she cared to see, passed towards it, followed by Lucy and Mr. Ravensburg; when there, almost close to them, stood the bedizened stranger.

"Do you see that fellow?" inquired Ravensburg, directing Mrs. Chard's attention to the imposing-looking man in question, as he placed Lucy in the carriage by her side.

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Mrs. Chard, who would never have become a reader of character had she studied Lavater for a lifetime, and whose taste was peculiar, "what a magnificent man! He must be somebody of consequence."

"He puzzles me," added Ravensburg, checking the smile that would have risen to his lips at the words. "His face seems familiar to me, yet I cannot call to mind where or when I saw it."

The chafed horses, driven into restiveness by the heat and the insects, would wait no longer, but sprang away, fretting and foaming; and when Lucy looked from the carriage after Francis Ravensburg, she again encountered the unhallowed gaze of the stranger.

The day went on to its close. The extreme heat had passed away with the daylight. The Casino rooms were lighted up to receive the crowds pouring into them, and the strains of the music might be already heard. One apartment, a small, square room, had but few people in it, perhaps a dozen. *It was the room appropriated to gambling.* Under the plea of innocent amusement, "merely a hand at cards to while away an evening hour," play, to an excess, was permitted and carried on, in the year (many years ago now) and at the place of which this story treats. Immense sums were lost and won nightly, and several English ladies of good family were so infatuated, so far forgot the retiring manners befitting an English gentlewoman, as to take part in the diversion.

At one of the small tables sat Mrs. Chard. Her opponent was Colonel Darcy, and they were playing *écarté*. Several bettors stood around. Colonel Darcy was losing, as he had been ever since he sat down; but Mrs. Chard was this night in luck. The lady had marked four; the colonel, none.

"I propose," said the latter, taking up a fresh hand.

"Play," replied Mrs. Chard. And he played the knave of diamonds.

"King and game!" said the lady, throwing down the king of trumps.

The colonel rose and moved away, observing that the cards were against him.

"Will you permit me the honour of playing a game with you, madam?" inquired a very imposing voice, all mouth and consequence, at Mrs. Chard's elbow. And, looking up, she beheld the "magnificent" stranger who had stood near her carriage in the morning.

"My name is Carew, madam," began the stranger, seating himself in the vacated chair. "My friend, Major"—Mrs. Chard did not catch the name—"promised to introduce me to you to-night, but he is not yet here. Captain Carew."

"Major *who?*" demanded Mrs. Chard, somewhat taken aback by the showy stranger's unceremonious manner.

"Terrible weather, is it not?" remarked Captain Carew, apparently not hearing Mrs. Chard's question. "I left London on my way to Italy, to join my friend, Lord Seymour, but this exaggerated heat has caused a halt in my journey. I cut to you, madam," he concluded, laying down five napoleons.

"Sir," said Mrs. Chard, "those stakes are higher than I play for."

"Fear not, madam: my life on it, you win. I am but an indifferent player, an almost invariable loser."

Mrs. Chard played, and did win. Other games followed with the same result; and the stranger laid down ten napoleons.

"Money seems of little value to you," observed one of the admiring bystanders.

"Men at their ease for it can afford such trifles as these losses without a ruffled temper: and I do not play often," was the complaisant answer.

Outside, in the little garden attached to the lower terrace, hidden from the moonbeams by the trees and shrubs, stood Francis Ravensburg. The sweet face of his betrothed—betrothed long ago in heart, if not in words—rested close to his. He loved her but with the ordinary love of man—an episode in the drama of man's life. It was shared with the world's pleasures; the pursuits of youth; with admiration for others of her sex and station. Yet he made the rapture and Eden of *her* existence; and she stood there with him in the shade, her heart beating with its excess of happiness. The scene itself was lovely. Upon the terrace, but unseeing them, were many forms of youth and beauty, who had escaped from the heat within; perhaps lovers, as they were. Innumerable fishing-boats were putting out to sea; the pier was crowded with evening promenaders; the cliffs around, contrasting their light and shade, looked majestic enough at that hour; the bright moonbeams were playing on the waves which the tide was sending rapidly up, and the music from the ball-room floated harmoniously on the distance. And there she remained: his arm thrown round her, and her cheek resting passively on his shoulder, listening to the sweet vows he was ever ready to whisper.

Just then, leaning over the terrace at a little distance, appeared the face of a Spanish lady, her features clearly discernible in the bright moonlight.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" murmured Francis Ravensburg, as he gazed upon her, unconscious, probably, that he spoke aloud: and Lucy drew away from her lover.

"Lucy, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Chard, coming up as they reappeared in the dancing room, "allow me to introduce Captain Carew. He desires to dance a quadrille with you."

With an appealing glance, Lucy clung to the arm of Francis Ravensburg: but how could he interfere with a mother's introduction? And the profusely-jewelled man bowed, with evident admiration and some grace, over the hand of his lovely partner.

"Your friend appears to be interested in his companion," observed the captain, as he crossed over to Lucy, after figuring away in one of the quadrilles.

Lucy looked round. But a few yards from her stood her lover, conversing animatedly with the Spanish girl. A rush of pain passed through her heart, but she answered her partner with a cold, haughty gesture.

Mrs. Chard left the rooms early, for their heat was intolerable, and Lucy looked for Francis Ravensburg to attend them as usual to the carriage. But he did not notice their departure: he was amongst

the dancers. His arm encircled the waist of the young baroness, and his eyes were bent on her with admiration, as he whirled her round the room to the strains of the most exquisite waltz ever composed by Strauss.

"What an acquisition!" exclaimed Mrs. Chard, settling herself in her carriage, as they drove away. "Do you like him, Lucy?"

"Like him?" repeated Lucy, mechanically, rousing herself out of a reverie, and really not understanding of whom her mother spoke.

"Captain Carew."

"Not at all," said Lucy, with emphasis. "He is extremely disagreeable."

"What?" cried the astonished Mrs. Chard. "Disagreeable! He is one of the most delightful men *I* ever saw—full of general information. But you are so taken up with that young Ravensburg, Lucy, you have eyes and ears for no one else. He hates cards, too."

"Your new acquaintance, mamma?"

"I mean Frank Ravensburg. *He* hate them indeed! he lost his money to-night like a prince—I do believe he is one in disguise. I never won so much in my life, Lucy, at one sitting. I hope and trust he will make some stay in the town."

II.

A MONTH or two passed away, and little alteration had taken place in the position of the parties mentioned above. The youthful Baroness of Laca was turning the heads of half the men, and exciting the envy and jealousy of all the women. But, beyond all doubt, her favoured cavalier was Frank Ravensburg.

It was impossible that Mr. Ravensburg could be otherwise than gratified at the preference the young Baroness accorded him, even if love for her found no admission to his vain heart. He was still attentive to Lucy Chard, still enacted the part of her lover; but hour after hour was spent by the side of Isabel de Laca; he would often leave Lucy's side for hers, and his sweetest words were breathed to her. The truth was, he was *fascinated* with her—which is a different thing from love: though, in the height of the delusion, it may appear wondrously like it. But how was Lucy, looking on with a jaundiced eye, to distinguish the difference? And there were times when she was well-nigh stung into madness.

The jewelled stranger, too, had risen into no little favour and importance with the migratory inhabitants of the gay French watering-place. He had served in the Indian army, it was understood, but had for years retired from it, on an ample fortune. And he was on the most intimate terms (when he lived there) with all the Dons of all the kingdoms of the East. These oft-talked-of pieces of information, coupled with the imposing richness of the gallant captain's attire, the costly ornaments which adorned his pseudo-handsome person, a dashing, off-hand, pushing manner, which in a

great man is cried up as proper assumption, and in an inferior one is resented as insolence, were not without their effects on the worshipping minds of the bath-taking public, and he became their passing idol. In justice to this gentleman, it must be mentioned that those were the days of what the Americans would call "loud" dress and much ornament in the shape of personal jewellery. Such jewellery was not supposed ever to be false then: certainly any one audacious enough to hint it might be so in this instance would have been consigned to Coventry on the spot. Men and women alike courted Captain Carew: even Frank Ravensburg, with all his attractions, was neglected by the ladies for the glaring stranger. But Captain Carew cared not for their admiration: Lucy Chard alone occupied his thoughts, and his attentions were continually lavished upon her, in spite of her shrinking rejection of them. His leisure time was devoted to gambling; he seemed to have grown wonderfully fond of it: and fortune invariably seemed to favour him now, as if in defiance of his former depreciating assertion to Mrs. Chard. Had he not been so immensely above such a suspicion, people might have begun to doubt whether his playing was quite on the square. Heavy sums had been lost to him in more quarters than one, and it was whispered that Mrs. Chard was his debtor to a frightful amount.

Carriages were passing to and fro on the crowded port, amongst them Mrs. Chard's: and during a momentary stoppage, caused by a blockade of fish-carts, a horseman, well mounted, reined in by its side, and placed his delicately-gloved hand on its panels.

"Shall you be at the rooms to-night, Lucy?" he whispered.

"Mamma will. But—Francis,"—she grew strangely agitated—"I have things to say to you, and would remain at home if you can come in. Will you sacrifice this one evening to me?"

"Sacrifice! It is a strange term, Lucy, when applied to us. I will be with you early in the evening."

She sighed deeply. Unfortunately, another person had heard the last sentence. Even Captain Carew, who stood, unseen, close to the elbow of the young horseman.

When the stoppage on the road was removed, the carriage rolled on, and Frank Ravensburg continued by its side; but, in the crowded state of the port, to retain this post became a work of difficulty; and, with a word of adieu to Lucy, he drew away. On the return of the carriage soon afterwards, Mr. Ravensburg had resigned his steed to his groom, and was pacing the port, side by side with Isabel de Laca.

"This night shall end it," murmured Lucy, closing her aching eyes when the unwelcome vision had passed. "An explanation shall take place between us, and I will return his love-gifts to him, or—retain them for ever."

In the evening, according to his promise to Lucy, Francis

Ravensburg set out for the château occupied by Mrs. Chard, which was situated about half a mile from the town. When half way there, he encountered Captain Carew: the captain having been a dinner-guest at the château.

"A day too late for the fair, Mr. Ravensburg, if you are bound for Mrs. Chard's," was his accosting salutation. "They have left the house for the rooms. There goes the carriage," he added, pointing to the upper road.

"Who have left it?" demanded Frank, haughtily.

"Mrs. Chard and Lucy, with Madame de Larme. She dined with us."

"*Miss Chard?*" uttered Frank, interrogatively, looking as if he would willingly have cut the gallant captain in two.

"Did I not say so?" returned the captain. "I thought I did. She seemed inclined to remain at home—blooming for a whole evening alone, like the last Rose of Summer—but I persuaded her out of the romantic idea."

"Coxcomb!" muttered Frank between his closed teeth. "But it is a shame of Lucy to be so changeable."

Retracing his steps, Mr. Ravensburg called in at his hotel, to make some alteration in his dress for the rooms. And there he found a letter, summoning him to England on urgent business. His first care was to ascertain at what hour the first steamer for England quitted the port. He found one would leave for London at three in the morning, and secured a berth in it. Some few other preparations were necessary, and by the time they were completed, it was hard upon ten o'clock. He then took his way to the rooms, where he expected to find Lucy.

"By the way," he soliloquised, as he walked on with a quick step, "did not Isabel say something on the port to-day about their leaving to-morrow for England? It was just as that bustle occurred when little Judd was thrown from his horse, and I lost her afterwards. I do hope it is so: she is the sweetest girl (I can never think of her as a married woman) I know—next to Lucy. By Jove! to have her as *compagnon de voyage* would reconcile one to all its customary inconveniences."

With the last consoling reflection he reached the rooms, and giving his hat to an attendant, entered the heated dancing-apartment. But his eyes roved round it in vain in search of Lucy, and he made his way to the card-room.

"Where is Lucy?" he inquired of Mrs. Chard, who was of course amongst the players; her anxious countenance betokening that her luck was not great.

"Do procure me an ice, Mr. Ravensburg," was her answer; "I am dying for one. Those servants never come into this room, where they are most wanted."

"But where can I find Lucy?"

"The king again?" exclaimed the agitated woman. "Captain Carew, what luck you have! The ice, pray, Mr. Ravensburg."

"And Lucy?" repeated Frank, bringing her the ice with all speed.

"Lucy? Oh, she would not come to-night; she remained at home. Some whim, I suppose. You deal, captain."

"You told me Miss Chard was on her way hither," cried Ravensburg, darting a ferocious look at the sparkling player.

"My good fellow, I thought she was. But who is to be answerable for a woman's mind? It shifts as often as a weather-cock. Game, Mrs. Chard."

"I would give a trifle if I could recollect where it is I have seen that walking jeweller," ejaculated Frank. "I know it was at nothing creditable. The remembrance haunts me like a nightmare, and yet I can make of it nothing tangible. I must write to Lucy from London and explain," thought he; "it is too late to go there now."

"Isabel!" he exclaimed, seeking out the young baroness, "did you tell me, or not, that you thought of going to England?"

"To-morrow, by the Dover boat."

"And I start to-night at three. I am called to London on business."

"Then delay your voyage until to-morrow. Papa and mamma can take care of each other, and you can take care of me," she laughed. "Don't say no, Mr. Ravensburg."

"It will make but little difference, only a few hours, in the time of my arrival in town," he soliloquised, "and I should escape that horrid long passage as well. True I ought not to delay: but—I *will* wait—and—and in that case I can see Lucy to-morrow."

And communicating his decision to Madame de Laca, just as the music struck up a waltz, he placed his arm on her delicate waist, round which glittered a zone of jewels, and whirled her away until her head was dizzy.

And there stood Lucy Chard on the balcony of her mother's château; there she had stood ever since eight o'clock, watching the road that led from the town, with a flushed cheek, and a heart sick with expectation. Every fresh footstep, sounding in the stillness of the night, was listened to; but long before its owner came in sight, the strangely-fine ear of love had told her it was not that of Francis Ravensburg. The stars came out, shining brilliantly. Lucy looked up at the constellations: she knew their places, where they were, or would be, later in the year. The great bear, creeping on; the giant Orion, with its rapid strides; the lady in her chair; the united Pleiades, and the many others; some were there, some not: but she turned to look, in vain, for Sirius, beautiful amongst the stars.

The sound of the church clocks, telling nine, came borne towards her on the breeze. "This is the impatience of a *lover!*" she exclaimed, with a burst of anguish. She took a costly trinket from her bosom, which he had placed there but three little months before, recalling his words as he did so. And she began reasoning with her-

self that he could not be false to her—oh never, never! And so the moments dragged by until the bells told ten, and then she laid her aching forehead upon the cold iron balcony. Had she heard the old Chinese proverb?

"To expect one who does not come: to lie in bed and not to sleep: to serve and not to be advanced, are three things enough to kill a man."

To expect one who does not come: and he more to her than earth; to dread that, even then, whilst she was watching in vain mockery, he was with her rival: shedding upon her the heaven of his presence; whispering passionate vows, that once were hers, in her ear; pressing his coveted kisses on her lips! My good young lady, if you have never experienced this, do not attempt to guess at the anguish of Lucy Chard.

Her mother's voice aroused her long after, scolding her for being out there in the cold. Lucy entered. She could not avoid observing, in spite of the painful anxiety of her own feelings, that Mrs. Chard seemed to be unnaturally excited, paced the room with a troubled step. But, full of suspense and suspicion about her lover, wishing, perhaps, to know the worst, she turned her face from her mother, and spoke.

"Did you happen to see Mr. Ravensburg?"

"See him, yes. He was at the rooms, waltzing away with Isabel de Laca when I left."

A cold shiver ran through Lucy's veins, and her sight seemed to leave her; but save for the terrible paleness of her features, no outward emotion was visible. All her fearful doubts were realised; her worst jealousy was confirmed: Francis Ravensburg had deserted her for another.

"Lucy, you do not look well," observed Mrs. Chard; "you must have been out of your mind to stand on that balcony. The nights are chilly now. Take a glass of wine."

"Not any, thank you," she replied. "I am tired, and will go to bed. Good night——"

"Oh," interrupted Mrs. Chard, "Mr. Ravensburg told me he was going to England to night."

Lucy let fall the handle of the door, and turned.

"I think he said so. I hardly know. My luck has been wretched, Lucy. I wish to heaven I had never touched a card! I wish to heaven I had never played with Captain Carew!"

"But Mr. Ravensburg?" questioned Lucy.

"I don't recollect much of what he said. Called thither upon business, I think it was. Go and ask the baroness to-morrow; no doubt she can tell you all about it."

"Good night, mamma," said the unhappy girl.

The steamer for Dover was to start at one o'clock the following day. Previously to that, Mr. Ravensburg went to the château. Lucy was out. Mrs. Chard, alarmed at Lucy's pale cheeks and absent

manner when she rose, had hurried her out for a drive, sorely, sorely against her will. He waited, hoping they would return; but at length he was obliged to go, for time pressed. Not with a quick step, however, for he still hoped to meet her, if but to have one single parting word; and upon encountering a great bathing-omnibus on his way, he leaped upon its step, thinking it might contain Lucy, to the untold-of scandal of its chief occupant, a "sister" from the convent of the Dames Ursulines, who was conducting some younger "sisters" to take their daily plunge in the sea.

But Ravensburg jumped off the step quicker than he had leaped on it, for the bell, giving notice of the starting of the steamer, was sounding in his ear. He tore along, and halloed with all his might. The steamer was putting off from the side, and its commander was already on the paddle-box.

"Heigh, boat! Stop, captain!" cried the bedizened Carew, who stood on the edge of the port close to the steamer, his chains and his shining stones glittering in the sun. "Here's a passenger coming full tear. You'd better wait."

"We are behind our time already," grumbled the captain. "Shove away there! Take care of them cords."

"But here he is," screamed Carew; "it is Mr. Ravensburg. Just wait half a moment. I know he has important business in England."

"Make haste, then," roared the captain, directing his voice to the distance. "Hold hard a minute, lads."

"Thank you, thank you," panted Ravensburg to Carew, as he tossed his permit to the police-officer, and leaped on to the paddle-box.

"Yes," added the sailor-captain, "you may thank that gentleman for being taken to England to-day, Mr. Ravensburg. I should have been some yards up the harbour."

Ravensburg looked to the quay, and again nodded his thanks to Captain Carew; but on the latter's countenance sat so strange an expression of triumph—*of triumph over him*—that he stood aghast. Feeling confounded for a moment, he concluded that the glare must have deceived him; and, descending to the deck, he clasped the offered hand of Isabel de Laca, and seated himself beside her.

"Do you see that steamer?" demanded Captain Carew, an hour afterwards, of Lucy, pointing to the Dover boat, that had now traversed half her distance, as he stood at the north-western window of Mrs. Chard's drawing-room, which commanded a wide expanse of sea.

Lucy turned her eyes towards the Channel.

"You are looking at the wrong one—what a beautifully clear day it is!—the one on the left is coming from Dover; the one on the right is nearing it; it is the latter I mean."

"What of it?" questioned Lucy.

"It contains Frank Ravensburg and his lady-love," whispered the captain, fixing his eyes on Lucy's crimsoned and rebellious counten-

ance, as he seized her hands. "He is there with Isabel de Laca; his dearest Isabel, as I heard him call her last night. Such terms can only exist between the closest and sweetest ties: even I have not yet addressed such to you."

The words were bad enough, but to be thus kept face to face with that man was, to Lucy, horrible.

"Unhand me, Captain Carew," she indignantly exclaimed. "How dare you so address me?—how dare you touch me?"

He dared to do more, for he bent down and kissed her, still keeping her a prisoner.

"Marry *first*, Lucy," he said, unheeding her anger; "marry first, and the triumph will be yours. We will go forth and blazon our happiness in his face; we, the loving bridegroom and bride."

But the climax of indignation gave Lucy unnatural strength; she wrenched her hands from him, and pulled the bell-rope violently.

"Begone," she cried, spurning him with a motion of her foot; "another moment, and I order the servants to thrust you forth."

He seized again her trembling hands, he looked in her agitated, indignant countenance, and spoke in slow and measured terms:

"Do so, Lucy Chard; but know that, by so doing, you destroy your mother."

There was truth, terrible truth, in his words and aspect; and Lucy, with a sensation of fear that approached to suffocation, motioned the coming servants from the room, and sinking on a chair, signed to him to explain himself, but to approach her not.

It was a humiliating position—a violation alike of human and of nature's laws—for a mother to be kneeling at the feet of her only child, suing for forgiveness, praying to be saved from poverty and exposure; yet in the autumn we are writing of, in the château inhabited by Mrs. Chard, that scene was enacted.

"Take all, take all!" cried the ill-fated girl, clasping her hands in agony, and, in her turn, kneeling to her mother. "Sacrifice my fortune to his rapacity; I will never think of it, never ask for it; but oh, spare me!"

"He holds bonds for *all*, Lucy," returned the miserable woman. "I, your sole guardian, have violated my trust. Money, estates, jewels, furniture, all have long been his; but heaven knows that when I in my madness staked yours, I did it with the hope that I might redeem what I had lost."

"Oh this play!—this infatuation!" moaned Lucy. "How can people so blindly rush on to their ruin?"

"Make the worst of it, Lucy: you cannot know half its horrors, the hell it creates. Reproach me—spurn me—it will be relief compared with what I have of late endured."

"I would give my very life for you, mother, to ensure your happiness," she faintly said, "but I cannot sacrifice myself to this man."

"It would be no sacrifice, Lucy," pleaded Mrs. Chard; "did I think so, I would never urge it. Your girl's thoughts have been given to Francis Ravensburg, and all other men appear to you distasteful. But now that he has forsaken you, gone to England with that Spanish woman, whom he is about to make his wife, would you be so lost in respect to yourself as to let him retain his hold upon your heart? Would you let *the world* suspect it?"

Lucy pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples. It would be a mercy could she shut out for ever the light of day.

"Unless you consent to marry *him*, Lucy, when he will return all my bonds, retaining only such as belong to you, there must be an exposure," she exclaimed, passionately; "no earthly help can avert it. For the poverty I should care comparatively little, *but I will not survive exposure.* Lucy: I speak calmly, rationally, firm in my own purpose: I will not survive it. Child! it is a fearful thing to deliberately destroy a mother."

Captain Carew entered, an accepted suitor. Mrs. Chard had murmured some heartfelt words of thanks to Lucy, and Captain Carew advanced towards his future bride, a speech of love or congratulation on his lips, when Lucy, who was trembling as if she had the ague, fell forward in a fainting fit.

A strange tale went about the town. Of a man's covetous eyes cast upon a girl, and resolving to win her, though she was promised to another; of a mother being inveigled into play until she had staked and lost all; until shame and ruin stared her in the face; and of the child being offered up as the propitiatory sacrifice. But when names came to be mentioned, people laughed at the tale. A sacrifice to marry *him!* to share his riches, his jewels! Lucy was to be envied. And as to Mrs. Chard's having lost her fortune—why, she was still living at her château; in the same style, at the same expense. Nonsense, nonsense! the tale was one of the usual fabricated scandals of an English-frequented continental town. But what would that town have said could it have known that Mrs. Chard suppressed letters written to her daughter, from London, by Francis Ravensburg.

Lucy's consent being once wrung from her, Mrs. Chard took care that no time should be allowed her to retract it. She at once took her to Dover, where the ceremony was to be performed. The captain had strenuously urged that the wedding should take place in Paris, but Mrs. Chard as strenuously refused, observing that one never knew whether those foreign marriages stood good or not. So the captain had to yield, and it was arranged that he should follow them to Dover in three weeks. The affair, meanwhile, was kept a secret.

III.

In the drawing-room of one of the handsomest houses in Cayendish-square sat Isabel de Laca. A visitor was heard ascending the stair-

case, and the strange light of excitement at the presence of one beloved sat in her eye. It was Francis Ravensburg who entered.

He advanced to her not exactly as a lover, for no endearment was offered; but the tender, earnest regard with which he looked at her, and the lingering retention of the hand held out to him, told that he was not many degrees removed from one.

"I have some news for you," she said, in a quiet tone, but which, indifferent as it was, betrayed a cause for triumph, though Mr. Ravensburg detected it not. "I had a letter this morning from Madame de Larme."

"Ah! some continental news," he answered, a faint colour rising to his face.

"You remember that extraordinary-looking man, who played so high? He has gone over to Dover to be married."

"The walking-jeweller," returned Frank. "And who, pray, has been dazzled by his perfections?"

"Miss Chard."

"Absurd," he exclaimed, starting from his seat, the indignant blood rushing over his features. "My dear Baroness, you ought not to give credit to the malicious fabrications of that Madame de Larme."

"She says," continued Isabel, unheeding his interruption, "that Mrs. Chard has lost frightfully to Monsieur le Capitaine, and *dared* not refuse him her daughter. Any way, she and Lucy are staying there at the hotel."

"Isabel!" he exclaimed, emotion taking away all his self-possession, "there can surely be no truth in this?"

She turned from him coldly.

"Have you any objection to my seeing the letter?" he inquired.

She tossed it to him, and then began to walk indifferently about the room while he perused it, humming a scrap of an old, translated Spanish ballad. The first words audible were the following: perhaps she spoke them more distinctly than the rest:

" . . . . behold,
A baron, all covered with jewels and gold,
  Arrived at fair Imogene's door.
His treasures, his presents, his spacious domain,
  Soon made her untrue to her vows;
He dazzled her eyes, he bewildered her brain,
He caught her affections, so light and so vain,
  And carried her home——"

"By heaven, I have found it!" exclaimed Ravensburg, dashing his hand with so much force on the centre table that the lady's song was cut short, in consternation.

"That man—that demon," he continued, in answer to her gaze of inquiry. "You know, Isabel, I have often said how he puzzled me. And to think," he pursued, in strange excitement, "that Lucy Chard

should have been insulted by a companionship with him! There is contamination in his touch—infection in his very presence!"

"Who or what is he?" inquired the astonished woman. "Do you allude to Captain Carew?"

"Captain Carew!" was the ironical answer. "The fellow's name is plain Charles Johns. He is an outcast from society—a man whose conduct drew upon him the eye of the police—whose success in a certain swindling transaction, last spring, only became known to them coeval with his disappearance. But they shall not long remain in ignorance of his being in England. At Dover, eh!"

"These are serious charges, Francis."

"They are true ones. How could I be so long deceived by him! But I see it all now: false hair, false whiskers, false teeth, the paint on his face, and so altered a style of dress. *Captain Carew*, indeed! the impudent fellow!"

"But how came you to be acquainted with such a man?" was the next inquiry.

"Before he relapsed into worse crimes, he held a discreditable situation at a West-end gambling-house," was Mr. Ravensburg's answer, "and I have seen him there. That he should have been brought into contact with Lucy Chard!"

"Putting his dress and his presumption aside, the man had something of the gentleman about him."

"I believe he was one years ago. Educated as one, at any rate."

It was the morning subsequent to the above conversation that a breakfast party sat in a private room of the chief hotel at Dover. Mrs. Chard was next the fire, doing the honours of the table: opposite to her, in a flowery, gaudy, stiffened-out silk dressing-gown, with more baubles about him than ever, bloomed Captain Carew: and between them, pale, inanimate, as much like an automaton as a living being, drooped Lucy. She was plainly attired in a white morning robe, and, as if in contrast to the resplendent appearance of the captain, she wore no ornament. Not a precious stone, or a bit of gold was about her, except the wedding ring. She had been a bride three days—dejected, suffering, heart-broken; but so silent, so uncomplaining, that the mother who had sacrificed her, looked on her with a bleeding, if not with a remorseful heart.

"A delightful morning!" exclaimed the captain, helping himself to a third plateful of spiced beef. "We shall have a favourable trip, Lucy. With this wind, we shall be at Ostend in seven hours. I am sure you will like Brussels, and Baden-Baden's delightful."

"You look very cold, Lucy," said Mrs. Chard. "I fear I keep the fire from you."

"I wish you would try an egg, my love," gobbled the captain. "And a slice of this beef would do you an immense deal of good, if you would but eat it."

Lucy had been so extremely ill upon the wedding-day that Mrs.

Chard had absolutely refused to allow her to cross the channel, and had detained her until now at Dover. A servant entered with a letter and two newspapers, all of which he placed before Mrs. Chard.

"No letter for me, waiter?" demanded Captain Carew.

"None, sir."

There never were any letters for him, but he regularly made the same inquiry.

Mrs. Chard glanced at the address of the letter, and hastily thrust it into her apron pocket. "Will you look at the *Times*, captain," she said, handing him the journal in question: "and there's the *Morning Post* for you, Lucy."

The captain was busy with his breakfast, but his wretched wife mechanically opened the paper. At this moment there was heard a slight bustle and talking outside the room door. It was suddenly opened, and the face of the head waiter was thrust in.

"Captain Carew, if you please, can you step here for a moment? Now don't," added the man in an aside to somebody behind him, "don't come in sight of the ladies: they would be frightened out of their wits. He'll come out in a minute, fast enough, and then you can do the job without any bother."

"What is it?" said the captain. "I am at breakfast."

"Won't detain you a moment, sir," added the waiter, kicking out his feet at the legs of those behind, with the view of keeping them at a distance.

The captain rose and walked out of the room, swinging his breakfast napkin majestically in his hand. Ranged against the wall was an officer from Bow-street, backed by a couple of Dover policemen. The head waiter shut the door.

Lucy was engaged with the newspaper, and Mrs. Chard, turning away, opened her letter. She knew the handwriting. A note was inside, addressed "Miss Chard." The lady stirred the fire into a blaze, popped it in, and read her own:

"My dear Madam,—I have just heard that you are staying at Dover, and that the individual, calling himself Captain Carew, is also there. It has been discovered who this man is. You may remember I said he puzzled me; but his disguise was so thoroughly complete. False hair and whiskers, false teeth, a false complexion, and so altered a style of dress, would deceive the detectives themselves. His true name is Charles Johns. His career has, for long past, been most disreputable; and a successful swindling transaction, in which he was recently engaged, put him into funds, and sent him flying over the water, out of the reach of Bow Street. Ere you receive this, he will be in custody. I write in haste, and will give you further particulars when we meet. Deeply annoyed that this villain should ever have come into contact with you and Lucy, believe me, yours very faithfully, Francis Ravensburg."

With an exclamation of horror, Mrs. Chard threw down the letter. One fearful confirmation of its contents rushed to her mind: he had married in the name of Charles Johns Carew. She darted to the door; and there, handcuffed, supported by the officers, and gazed at by half the servants of the house, was her gallant son-in-law, his terror visible even through his carmined cheeks. Lucy took up the letter, and read it, every word.

"Not one mention of me," murmured the unhappy girl, "not one word of remembrance: yet, for all he knows, I am still free as air."

IV.

Autumn, winter, spring rolled away, and the summer was quickly passing. Mrs. Chard had returned at once, with her daughter, to her residence on the French coast. Who can describe the care that had been bestowed upon Lucy: who shall imagine the soothing tenderness of her remorseful mother to win her back to health? But all in vain. Her star of happiness had set, and that of life was on the very verge of the horizon.

Occasionally they took her to the terrace at the casino, hoping that the gay scene and groups of visitors might draw her thoughts from herself. She was now growing almost too weak to go; but one warm, lovely morning, was prevailed upon to give an apathetic consent, observing that it would probably be for the last time. Mrs. Chard, dismissing the carriage, placed Lucy on one of the terrace benches, and went herself to the newspaper-room.

Not long had Lucy sat there when a party entered the large room, and approached the window near Lucy: two ladies, and a tall, stately young man. He was the husband of the younger lady. They were Madame de Larme, the Baroness de Laca, who did not resign her title with her second marriage, and Francis Ravensburg. Presently he strolled from the room, and seated himself outside. A veiled, shrinking form was at the end of the bench, hidden from those within, and his face was turned towards his young wife and her companion, as he talked with them through the window, so that he observed her not.

"Do they play here as much as ever?" asked Mr. Ravensburg of Madame de Larme.

"Mon Dieu, non!" answered madame, shrugging her shoulders. "Such odd things were said last season, about people being ruined, and the like. I don't know whether they were true. However, cards have been interdicted."

"The place seems little changed," remarked the baroness, looking round. "I remember well the first time I ever saw it: it was also the first time I saw you, Francis. And though I was what you English call 'taken' with you, I little thought I was looking on my future husband."

"I never believed you would be his wife," said the Frenchwoman,

bluntly; "I took it for granted he was engaged to Lucy Chard. Quite a sad thing, was it not, for her husband to be called out so soon to his Indian possessions?"

"Indian possessions!" echoed Ravensburg. "Oh, ah, yes! I understand. He is on his Indian possessions now—or on some others. How did you hear that, madame?"

"How did everybody else hear it?" retorted madame. "They had been married but three days, when the captain received news which caused him to embark for India."

"From whence he is not likely to return," said Mr. Ravensburg.

"His wife, poor young thing, has moped herself into something—it is not consumption, I believe; but she is dying."

"She was an angel!" interrupted Ravensburg, passionately. His wife laughed a little affected laugh of irony, and the two ladies moved away. He was about to follow them, when a low suffocating, ill-suppressed sob broke upon his ear. He took no notice of it; it was nothing to him; and at that moment the well-known carriage of Mrs. Chard bowled suddenly up to the terrace-entrance, turned, and waited. The lady on the bench arose, and tottered, rather than walked, towards it.

"Good mercy!" he articulated, lifting his hands. There—seated by him—she of whom he had taken no notice, was Lucy Chard.

"Forgive me, Lucy," he murmured, springing towards her; "forgive me, but I recognised you not. You are so fearfully altered."

She was indeed. A shrunken, wasted form, white attenuated features, on which coming death had set his shadow and its colouring, were all that remained of Lucy Chard. A powerful agitation impeded her utterance, but she motioned him towards the carriage. The servants touched their hats as they recognised him; the footman held the door open, and Francis helped her in.

"Drive home quickly," she gasped to the servants: "you can return for my mother."

"Lucy, are we thus to part?"

She resigned to him the hands he would have taken, and he stood there, leaning in towards her, and motioning the footman to a distance. The remembrance of former days came over him: memory leaped back to the time when he was last in that carriage, and she, his best beloved, at his side. He recalled the vows he had then made her, so confident in the enduring faith of his own weak heart. He forgot their separation; he forgot his own marriage, or remembered it but with a passing execration, and unconsciously he addressed words of endearment to her as of old.

"I am dying, Francis," she said, "and you are shocked to see me. I can speak freely to you now, almost as I would to myself, because I know that in a few days, perhaps hours, time for me will be no more. *You* made me what I am."

"Lucy!"

"You know the wretched marriage I was forced into—you have heard its details?"

"Some of them."

"That was your work. Had it not been for your conduct towards me, I never should have fallen into it. You professed to love me."

"It was no profession, Lucy."

"And *I* worshipped *you*—I lived but in your presence—I clung to you as to life: and you left me for another. In the evening, in the morning, at noon-day you were with her; riding, walking, whispering by her side."

"Oh, Lucy, believe me, I had no love for her! I did it without thought. She was an attractive woman, and I was willing to while away an idle hour. I never loved her."

"It may have been so," she feebly articulated. "Want of thought causes more misery than want of heart. I could not read your secret feelings: I only knew you were ever with another."

He acknowledged it had been as she said, and would have poured forth his vain repentance. Repentance! what availeth it, when there can be no atonement?

"Forgive me, Lucy," he murmured, as he touched her pale young face, "forgive, forgive me. Oh that I could as readily forgive myself! Had I taken care to keep you for my own, you never would have been brought to this."

The scalding tears were coursing down her cheeks, and lingeringly she withdrew her hands from his. "I have forgiven you long ago, Francis: may you be happy with the wife you have chosen. Farewell! Farewell!"

He closed the door; the footman sprang up behind; the carriage rolled away, and Lucy sank back in it. The excitement caused by thus suddenly meeting him had been too great. A fearful oppression, almost as of coming death, was upon her: she thought life was about to depart there and then; and when she would have spoken to the coachman to drive faster, her strength suddenly failed.

When the carriage reached the château-gates, there, heated and breathless, stood Francis Ravensburg. He opened the door himself, and would have lifted her out. But she remained in the corner, huddled up, it seemed, half sitting, half lying. He turned his colourless face to the servants, and there was something in it which caused them hastily to approach. She had died in the carriage.

Not in the cemetery attached to the gossiping French seaport, with its numerous groups of summer idlers, but in that of a retired country hamlet, a few miles distant, in the narrow corner of it consecrated to Protestant interments, is a plain, white-marble tomb. The inscription on it consists of only two initial letters, and the date of a year. It is the grave of Lucy Chard.

R & E. TAYLOR

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER IV.

DR. THADDEUS.

ADELA GRANARD had retired to rest after her strange interview with Mrs. Dangerfield. Deep, dreamless sleep had come to her after long waiting, from which she was awakened by the sound of a footstep in her room, and what, at the first moment of returning consciousness, seemed to her the flash of a dazzling light in her eyes.

Recent vigils had given her the habit of wakening thoroughly at a call, and her senses were instantly on the alert, though her heart beat violently as she remembered how securely, as she believed, she had bolted her door. It was not very reassuring to discover that the nocturnal visitant was Hester Dangerfield herself, wrapped in an old opera cloak, with the crimson hood partially covering her face. Doubts of her sanity, or, at any rate, of her judgment, returned in full force; and it was by an effort that Adela controlled her nerves, so as not to excite those which might be dangerously inclined to excitement already.

"Mrs. Dangerfield," she said, quietly, "is there anything I can do for you?"

A feverish hand grasped hers, and Hester Dangerfield sat down by the bed.

"Yes, you can do what no one else can. You can listen to me, and save me from what would be worse than death. If I lose heart altogether my brain will turn, and then all hope will be over. Adela, for the sake of those who are gone—and may be near us now—will you listen to me?"

"Of course I will," replied Adela, "and as long as you like, if you will go to bed now and tell me all to-morrow."

"No, no, you do not understand. This is a safe moment; no one is watching, or thinking about us: by daylight we are never alone. Adela, my last hope is in you. I had thought of sending for an old friend in London, but the risk was very great, and you have been sent to save me from it. Listen, I am a doomed woman. Yes, there is no doubt of the fact; I may be taken any moment. Any excitement, painful or otherwise, might carry me off before you could look round, and I have a great deal to do which has been too long left undone. Oh, if I could live those years over again!—but it is too late now for me; all I can hope is to save my poor innocent child. Thanks to Harry's will, I have the power to appoint her a guardian, but I knew no one whom I could trust. Will you do me this service, for old sake's sake? You do not answer—what is the difficulty?"

"Only," said Adela, whose breath was nearly taken away by the proposal, "that my future is at present unsettled; I had formed no decided plan, and am not prepared for such a responsible charge. Is there no one ——"

"No one so fit as you are—free, of age, independent, and of a good and generous stock. You will think of her happiness, and not of any good it may do yourself. You cannot—you will not refuse the prayer of a dying woman for her only child?"

The look, the tone, the gesture, though restrained by caution, had quite enough in them to warn the traveller of the risk of refusal; even the suggestion of delay brought such an expression of despair into the unhappy woman's face, that Adela could only soothe it away by a hasty promise to do what she wished, trusting that she was doing right, though pledging herself to she knew not what. Hester Dangerfield rose from her knees, pressed her to her bosom, and then glided away by a door which Miss Granard had believed to be that of a closet, but which she now perceived had been locked on the outside.

How much she slept during the remainder of the night, we need not enquire. Before she had finished dressing in the morning, Miss Joseph knocked at her door, brought her a cup of strong coffee, and lighted the stove. Her appearance was so exactly what it had been over-night, that Adela suspected she had never gone to bed, and began to wonder how people lived in such a state of things. Her enquiries after Hester were received with an emphatic, "much stronger," and with the intimation that breakfast would soon be ready, as Mrs. Dangerfield expected her man of business at ten o'clock. Charles had come round for orders. Should she tell him that Miss Granard would not cross that day? The question made Adela start and look at her earnestly.

"You know, then, Miss Joseph, what happened?"

"I know she came to you in the night; I could not prevent it," said Miss Joseph, still busy with the stove.

"Do you know what she made me promise?"

"Better than you do, perhaps. And I know, too, that you will keep your word. Don't be longer dressing than you can help."

"One minute, Miss Joseph. Does Professor Dangerfield know it yet, do you suppose?"

Miss Joseph, leaving the room, stopped with her hand on her chin, to consider.

"I am inclined to think we have the start of him this time," she said, "but we have not an hour to spare. Lock your box before you come out, and bring the keys away with you."

It may readily be imagined that Miss Granard's arrangements did not take long, and she found Miss Joseph on the watch, who took her down to the long salle-à-manger, at one end of which a small breakfast table had been set out, English fashion. Here Mrs. Dangerfield presently joined them, in a dark, quiet costume, much more becoming than her dress of the evening before. Her manner, too, was calmer, and her whole bearing that of a person resolved to carry out a definite purpose. For the first time, Adela saw again a shadow of the friend of former days; and indeed, every glance Hester turned on her guest was one of so much tenderness, that any thought of drawing back would have seemed like a breach of trust.

Not a word was said of the nocturnal visit; the conversation turned on general matters, and was kept up as a matter of good-breeding. Breakfast was scarcely over when Mr. Walrond, the lawyer, was announced, and business was commenced forthwith.

The will of Henry Stormount, Hester Dangerfield's first husband, had, as she told Adela, secured the handsome fortune he left her from being taken out of her power by a second marriage. She might use it and bequeath it as she pleased, and she was sole guardian of their only child Emily. Her present object was to give the same powers to Emily herself, to whom she left the bulk of her property, while to her present husband, Cozmo Dangerfield, she bequeathed a legacy of a thousand pounds. In the event, however, of her daughter's death before her coming of age, the whole fortune was to pass to him. All this had been already drawn up, and was read aloud by the lawyer, who observed that they only wanted now the name of Miss Stormount's guardian. When that of Adela Granard had been inserted, with power to choose another, if required, the young lady could not help feeling as if a rivet had been set in a chain, which left her a free agent no longer. And yet, had her freedom from it been offered her at the moment, it would most likely have been refused.

The will was witnessed by Miss Joseph and Mr. Walrond's clerk. It struck Adela at the time that there was no idea of providing for the former; Mr. Walrond was appointed executor, and to receive a hundred pounds for his trouble. Mrs. Dangerfield, when all was done, observed that the arrangement was made with her husband's

entire approval, as he knew he could not be Emily's guardian as well as her heir; and he had left the selection of guardian to her mother. Of course he had not foreseen the good fortune that had thrown her friend Miss Granard in their way: but he had promised not to interfere in the matter, let the choice fall where it might.

Adela thought, by the way Mrs. Dangerfield spoke, that she felt certain he overheard her. She looked at Miss Joseph, and the impression was confirmed. Every fibre of that good lady's frame was on the stretch to listen—her very cap seemed to bristle up, like the hair of an eager terrier. Not a sound, however, reached Miss Granard's ears, and old Mr. Walrond seemed absorbed in his pinch of snuff. As soon as he was gone, Hester caught her guest's hand.

"We must now go to see my child. I have sent for a carriage—put on your things as fast as you can. God will reward you, Adela, if man never does. You are not afraid of your work, are you?"

"A little," said Adela, smiling, though with a trembling lip.

"Yes, yes, I understand—but you will see. I do not give my confidence by halves—I will trust you to the uttermost; but ask no questions. You will know all in time."

Adela was not sorry to see her faithful servant, Charles, waiting to hand them into the carriage, and take his place by the driver. All was so strange that his presence was a relief; the vague consciousness of danger might prove to be only in the imagination, but Adela could not ignore it. The drive passed in silence; Hester had sunk back into a corner with closed eyes, and Adela forebore to put the enquiries that were on her lips. They stopped, after a quarter of an hour's drive, at the door of an old-fashioned house, with a garden at the back, suggestive of wall fruit and strawberries, for which, indeed, it was as famous as its master. Here Hester woke up from her torpor: and, desiring Charles to let her out, herself rang the bell, and asked for Dr. Thaddeus. The servant, a dark, sallow woman, who spoke rather indifferent French, replied that he was at home, but very busy in the museum: it was not his hour for receiving. As if prepared for this, Hester handed in a card, on which a pencilled line was written; and then beckoned to her companion to alight. By the time she had done so, the dark maidservant had returned, with an invitation to enter; and the ladies were shown through a rather narrow passage to a room nearly lined with glass cases of stuffed birds, beasts, and fishes; the only other furniture being a long table and one or two chairs. From one of these the master of the house slowly rose to greet them; and while he and Hester were exchanging civilities, Adela could take a hasty survey of his person—singular enough, she thought, in his Turkish dressing-gown, crimson skull-cap, and spectacles, his hands stained with ink and daubed with paste, as was only to be expected from his occupation, that of preparing labels for some of his curiosities. He spoke excellent English, and his voice was that of an educated man; and when he turned to make his bow

to the stranger thus introduced, the second impression on her mind was more favourable than the first. There was kindliness in his eye and smile, though she felt she should be sorry to make him angry. That he could be very angry on occasion, she had no doubt whatever. It struck her that Hester, though they were apparently on friendly terms, was nervously anxious to conciliate him.

"We are trespassing on your morning, my dear Doctor," she said, with a smile of deference, "and that is treason to the world; but I have only a short time allowed me to make you and my friend, Miss Granard, known to each other. She knows you by high repute, and you cannot but have heard of her father, Mr. Granard, whose loss is felt, not by us only, but by the public service. For many years he was a distinguished member of the diplomatic circle, and I have lost in him a friend and adviser such as nothing can replace."

She paused for breath; the old man only bowed, and waited to hear more.

"You are thinking to yourself that with such an adviser I ought not to be as I am; you are right—I never took the advice he gave; but I knew all the while how wise it was, and I know what his daughter has been to him. Adela, it is time you should know what Dr. Thaddeus has been to me. As a naturalist and man of science, he is famed all over the world; his opinion, his knowledge, are sought by the learned from all parts; and yet he finds leisure to take interest in the case of a poor nervous English girl, who is suffering from her mother's folly and weakness. I have brought you two together that you may act in concert. You must hear what he will tell you, and follow his advice."

The Doctor's spectacles had been turned upon Adela ever since her first introduction. Having scanned her from head to foot, he perhaps thought it time to hear her voice, for he broke in with the abrupt query, "Do you understand young girls, Miss Granard?"

"I ought to," said Adela, with an involuntary sigh; "I have had sisters—and lost them."

"And you are about to undertake this charge?"

"I have promised to be Emily's guardian, when required."

"When required! When do you go to England?"

"To-morrow morning, I hope. I have no settled home or plan at present."

"You go to-morrow. Why not to-night?"

"My dear Doctor ——" began Mrs. Dangerfield.

"My dear madam, excuse me. You come for advice, and time is precious. Has this lady seen your husband—the Professor?"

"Not yet," said Hester, dropping her voice; "but he has consented not to interfere in my choice."

"Indeed!"

The tone was significant, still more so the silence that followed. He took up the quill pen with which he had been writing, and

having carefully nibbed it, dipped it in the inkstand, and made a sign to Miss Granard to copy one of the labels lying before him. When she had done so, he took it up, and studied the characters carefully.

"I think, madam," he said to Hester, "your Professor despises the study of handwriting as unworthy his attention?"

She drooped her head, and made no answer.

"Come!" he said, rising, and replacing his velvet cap, "she shall see what his handwriting is, and judge of the science for herself."

Without another word he strode out of the museum, followed by the ladies, through a small conservatory (whose miscellaneous contents at any other moment would have interested Adela Granard very much) into an apartment sharing its warmth, but not its fragrance, for it was evidently used as a hospital for wounded dogs. Several of these interesting patients, in various stages of convalescence, reposed on rugs, or in baskets, in different parts of the room; and one, apparently in need of personal soothing and attendance, lay in the lap of a young girl, who was so absorbed in the endeavour to get a spoon into its mouth, that she did not at first heed the entrance of the visitors. The feeble tapping of grateful tails, as one or two of the cripples roused themselves to greet their surgeon, made her look up with a smile, which changed in a moment to a ghastly expression of terror. Putting the dog hastily down, she stood erect, glancing quickly from side to side, as if, like some hunted animal at a signal of danger, she were considering in which direction it were safest to fly. That one start and transformation, coupled with the anguish it reflected on the mother's haggard countenance, spoke volumes to the heart of Adela Granard. Without noticing how keenly Dr. Thaddeus was watching her face, and the effect so visible there, she hastened to remove the fears of the poor girl, by letting her see they were not accompanied by anyone. Moving a chair forward, Mrs. Dangerfield sank into it, holding out her arms to her child. When safe in that embrace, Emily could listen to the soothing assurances with which her mother's caresses were accompanied; and by degrees she took courage to look at the stranger; who, as she learned, had promised always to be her friend.

How much she needed a friend could be read in the pathos of those wistful eyes, which gazed into Adela's so piteously as to dim them with compassionate tears. No answer could have been fuller, or more satisfying. The nervous quiver of the poor girl's muscles relaxed; a sigh of relief stirred her chest, and she turned to her mother with a smile.

"Well, Emily?" said Mrs. Dangerfield, stroking her hair, "is she very alarming? Are you afraid of her?"

"Not at all; I like her very much. Will she stay with us?"

"She is going away to-morrow."

"But I thought she was come to be my friend."

"More than that, Emily. Listen to me, my love; you know I am often ill, and it might sometime happen that I should not recover. Whenever that does happen, Miss Granard will be your guardian, and you must obey her as if she were your mother."

"And am I to obey *him* too, mother?" The question was asked in a low tone, with a slight shiver.

"No, Emily; when that time comes you will not be under his authority again. Miss Granard will make a home for you with which he will have nothing to do—in England, too, where you have often wished to live."

"He told me that wherever I went he should always be able to find me, and make me do what he chose; only he can't here, because of Dr. Thaddeus," shuddered the girl.

"You have been happy here, Emily, with the kind Doctor, and your pets?"

"Oh yes, yes—I love them and they know me; and I love the Doctor. He knows greater secrets than any of us, so he can keep us all safe. I was frightened just at first, because I thought *he* had come in with you."

"And very nearly choked poor Coco there, in consequence," said the Doctor, who, having placed a seat for Adela, now took another himself, and lifted the dog upon his knee. "I tell you what, my child; Coco will never get well without change of air. Suppose Miss Granard were to take him to England with her."

"Would it do him good, really?"

"I should think it would. He would cross the sea, and hear nothing but kind words, and be petted and nursed in a sweet English home; and when spring comes he would go into the country, and smell the flowers, and roll on the green grass, and hear the birds sing, and feel the warm sunshine, and forget that there was such a thing as trouble in the world. Look at Miss Granard—don't you think anyone might be happy with her?"

Again the wistful eyes fixed themselves on the stranger's face, and lingered there with a yearning look, as if fascinated by the sweetness of her blush and smile.

"Would you like to have poor Coco?" Emily asked, anxiously. "He is very affectionate; but he is easily frightened, because they were cruel to him in his home."

"If you wish it very much, I will take him, dear," said Adela: who, though by no means anxious for such a charge, could not help thinking the Doctor had spoken with a double meaning.

"And you won't let anyone frighten him again?"

"Not if I can prevent it. My own home was one of love and kindness, and I hope nothing under my care will ever meet with anything else."

"And you are not afraid of anybody yourself?"

"No, indeed. If we love and fear God, and love our neighbour,

there is nothing to make us afraid at all. We don't allow people to frighten us in England."

"I wish I was going with you, to take care of Coco!"

The words came slowly out, but were so thoroughly in earnest that Adela was struck dumb. She knew not whether to laugh at the poor child or to encourage her. The Doctor knew, however, and pressed his advantage.

"Should you really like to pack up your things and go off in the steamboat to-night, Emily?"

She clasped her hands with a flush of hope. "Oh, if I may—I should be so glad!"

There was a groan from one of the listeners: Hester had sunk back in her chair as she made it. Dr. Thaddeus looked as if he could have stricken her to the earth.

"We are tiring your mother, child, and it is time she went back home to her sofa. Wish her good-bye, and then go and attend to your birds; they have been piping for you the last half-hour."

"Have they? I quite forgot them," she said, meekly, as if ashamed of having taken a joke for real earnest. "Good-bye, mother dear; you will go home and rest, won't you?"

"My darling, my darling, would to God we were at rest together, with no one to wake us or make us afraid! No, no; I don't mean that: I am as bad as Coco. Here is Miss Granard waiting to know if she is to have him or not."

"I think she would rather not," said Emily, slowly; "and until he loved her he would be a trouble, without me." Her mother's passionate words and embrace did not appear to strike her as unusual, but her last look at Adela was full of timid pleading, and it required a little urging from the Doctor to get the child out of the room. As soon as she was gone he locked the door behind her, and leaning on the back of a chair, faced the visitors with knitted brows.

"Now ladies," he said, lowering his voice, "you came here to-day for my advice; are you prepared to follow it?"

"Do not ask me," said Hester, bitterly, "I can do nothing. Here is my friend—it all rests with her."

The Doctor and Miss Granard exchanged glances, which were mutually understood.

"If it rests with me," said Adela, decidedly, "the matter is settled at once. I will take Emily with me to England."

CHAPTER V.

COCO.

It was past two o'clock when they alighted at Mrs. Dangerfield's house. Adela Granard ran up the stairs, and met Miss Joseph coming down. A very few words sufficed between them; Hester was

unwell—had not spoken the whole way home, and must be put to bed at once and kept perfectly quiet. Adela was going to put up her things, and the carriage would take her to some hotel near the quay. Without expressing either surprise or concern, Miss Joseph nodded assent, and while she was assisting her unhappy friend to her room, Miss Granard hurried to hers, in a state of generous excitement that, for the hour, drove sorrow and weariness into the background. No matter what the step might involve, no matter the anxiety of so responsible a charge, no matter all that prudence might suggest about undertaking she knew not what—all she could think of was that an innocent young creature had been subjected to long mental torture, and if not rescued at once might have worse to suffer still. Dr. Thaddeus had spoken plainly enough; his treatment had partially restored the health of the nervous system, but while it was liable to meet with fresh shocks he could answer for nothing, and every relapse added to the difficulty of cure. Should the Professor return, he would be sure to object, or else create an obstacle. The only chance was to seize upon the present opportunity and convey her beyond his reach; and Adela felt as if every moment would be an hour till she had placed the sea between them.

Her final preparations were quickly made: and she had thrown herself on her knees, seeking strength and guidance where it was sure to be found, when she was startled by a step across the floor, and in rising, was accosted by old Justine, the cook, who had brought her a basin of strong soup. Madame had sent it with a thousand amitiés, and would not rest if she did not hear it had been taken.

It had a savoury odour, and reminded the traveller that she had not tasted food for several hours; and as the woman lingered with the renewed assurance that Madame's rest depended on hearing Mademoiselle had enjoyed her consommé, Adela had already lifted the spoon to her lips when Miss Joseph put her head in at the opposite door.

"What have you got there?"

Adela explained. Miss Joseph was by this time smelling the savoury pottage.

"You can go, Justine," she said, in her insular French: and that functionary was not slow in obeying the direction. As soon as she was gone Miss Joseph took up the basin and emptied it out of the window.

"Baulked this time," she observed coolly, as she replaced it in the saucer. "It occurred to me only just now that she would try this. Don't you taste a crumb or drop in this house that anyone offers you but me. Do you hear?"

"My dear Miss Joseph, this is sensational to the highest degree," cried the surprised young lady. "What do you suppose she meant to do?"

"Not to be hanged on your account, certainly: but please tell me

why she went out of her way to give you a message from her mistress, who has not spoken a word, or seen her, since you brought her home?"

"She thought it would please me, perhaps."

"No doubt; but would it have pleased you to find yourself shortly miserably ill, and only fit for your bed for the next two or three days? You may laugh if you like, but it is my belief that she has had orders to keep you here till the Professor returns."

"You believe her to be his spy?" exclaimed Adela.

"I know her to be his tool. Who does the spy's work I cannot say, for Justine cannot read or write, and understands very little English. He takes his staff of assistants with him when he goes, and yet, whatever happens in his absence is known to him before he comes back. Now I am going to bring you some sandwiches and wine, and then you shall start. We will give out that you do not cross before the morning; but I shall come down to-night and see you off. Sensation, indeed! I wonder what your sensations would have been by this time, if I had not come in!"

Faithful to her promise, Miss Joseph was waiting at the appointed hour. They went on board with her young friend, and they had time to secure sofas in the cabin before they were joined by Dr. Thaddeus and Emily. The latter carried a basket; in which, as Adela guessed directly, reposed the invalid Coco: and the earnest desire to prevent his being hurt or frightened seemed to take away all apprehension about herself. She was eager and flushed, but not painfully so, and took the whole enterprise much more quietly than Miss Granard had expected. A few words from the Doctor made this easy to understand.

"The healthiest part about her," he said, in the brief colloquy they were able to hold before the arrival of the Brussels train, with its freight for embarkation, "is her capacity for loving. She is made to be a naturalist—I never had a pupil who took to it so kindly. She can do what she pleases with bird or beast, simply because her heart goes out to them all. This is the only means of cure I have tried upon her; and, if you take a different line, don't overlook this. Love has been starved out of her by unwholesome and unhallowed fear. It must be fed and be kept up, or it will devour itself. Have you thought of anyone to consult on the case?"

Adela mentioned one or two medical names, famous in London. He shook his head impatiently.

"I have little faith in your English doctors; but I do believe in the skill of one man, if only he can be persuaded to use it. I hear he has given up practice, but I have written him a statement, which, if you can find him out, he will attend to, as coming from me. Lose no time, but hunt him up wherever he is, and tell him that old Thaddeus has no better way of paying his debt than by sending him such a task by such a hand."

The entrance of several passengers with all their wraps and light luggage, cut short both reply and leave-taking; and the charge of

child and dog so absorbed Adela's attention, that it was not till both were asleep that she could read the address on the letter.

"Sir Marcus Combermere, Bart., M.D., London."

"Strange indeed!" she thought to herself, and sat musing over the singularity of the whole affair till she dropped into a doze: but only to be startled out of it again by a faint cry from Emily. "What is it, love?" she said, soothingly, as the poor girl cowered to her in terror.

"Someone came in and looked at me."

"The steward, dear, who takes the tickets—that is all. Take care, or you will startle Coco."

Alas! the warning came too late, as far as Coco was concerned. On feeling in his basket he was not there: was not to be found. All anxious search, persisted in under difficulties, proving vain, Adela was forced to believe that he had been stolen.

"Never mind, Emily," she said, intrepidly, "as soon as we land Charles will enquire, and offer a reward, and I have no doubt we shall get him back. You do not know how clever Charles is. *I* depend upon him constantly, and hardly ever find him fail."

The sobbing girl clung to her without reply; the incident had terrified her more than she could explain; and Adela felt her shiver, in spite of her warm wraps and the closeness of the cabin. She thought, over and over again that, if she lived to be a hundred, she should never forget that crossing. It was unusually long, owing to the return of the fog; and Emily was so faint and tired when they reached Dover, that she was only conscious of the comfort Charles's strong arms were in assisting her to the hotel, where they were to rest till the afternoon. Adela, however, mindful of her promise, made liberal offers of reward on Coco's behalf: and, when they were obliged at last to start without the dog, she gave her address at the lodgings bespoken for her in London; without hope, it must be owned, of its being of much avail. She said nothing, of course, to shake Emily's trust in Charles, who stoutly maintained that the dog would be brought back; and, indeed, the interest of expecting its arrival proved a salutary occupation for the poor girl's mind, taking her for the time out of herself. But the relief to Miss Granard's anxiety was great when, on the morning after their arrival in London, Charles appeared with a radiant face to announce that a lad had brought a little dog, which he would only deliver to the young lady herself. His account was that he had found it hiding among some sacks and baskets in the steamer, and being fond of dumb creatures had taken care of it till he could learn to whom it belonged, and as soon as he knew the address he came off by the train, to make sure of its being placed in the right hands.

"He looks a likely kind of lad, ma'am," was Charles's comment to his mistress; "not one of the sort that steal for the sake of the reward."

Adela thought the same when the boy came in, and showed a

handsome, intelligent face, with a pair of keen eyes that seemed to take in the whole contents of the apartment at a glance. His manner was fearless, but quite civil, and his carriage and bearing were very superior to his dress, which was both coarse and shabby. Nothing would induce him to touch the reward; when pressed to accept some token of their satisfaction, he observed that the only thing he wanted was work. Could the ladies help him to that? He had come to England in hopes of finding it, his parents being dead, and no one caring what became of him: his father had been a "professional," and he had learned a good deal of the business—well, he believed it would be called conjuring. He could do many of the best tricks, but it was a hard life, and he would rather earn his bread in some other way—as a gardener, and to look after a pony, best of all.

If he had indulged a hope of being hired then and there, he was, of course, disappointed. And Adela, among the numerous calls upon her time and attention, soon forgot all about him. The arrangement of her own affairs had to be deferred on Emily's account, the state of whose nerves rendered it expedient that she should have advice without delay. Sir Marcus Combermere, she found, was living in Westmoreland, and thither they must follow him. A sister of Charles had settled in that neighbourhood, and to her house Adela determined to convey her charge till she could obtain an interview with the great authority, and deliver Dr. Thaddeus's letter. Charles himself, rather against his will, was to be left in town, to see after some heavy luggage which was being sent to England by water. Had his mistress been going to any house but his sister's, he would probably have rebelled; but with Patty at the other end of the line, he hoped all would go right.

So hoped Adela Granard, in whose mind there was no craving for melodramatic adventures, the want of which modern travellers are apt to deplore.

The change of scene had a cheering effect on Emily's spirits. The first part of the journey was accomplished successfully: and between Coco and a new story book, the young lady was sufficiently entertained to have an appetite for the luncheon they carried with them, and to respond to the civilities of some good-natured fellow-passengers. That the train would not be a punctual one became evident early in the day: however, the delay did not appear of much consequence, until they had to change to a branch line. Not only were they obliged to wait some time, but when they moved on in their new carriage their progress was slow, for they had come into the snow: and very soon the storm fell upon them in such heavy fury that it was almost pitch dark in a few minutes. Presently the train stopped, and voices could be heard from different carriages asking questions which the wind blew away unanswered. Then they moved on again and Adela hoped the worst was over, until another stoppage came. A gentleman in the carriage attempted to open

the window; but he shut it hastily, with the remark that they were deep in a snow-drift.

It had happened once before, he said, some years ago, when a brother of his was detained half the night. At the time the line was made, the country people said it would be liable to these occasional accidents; but they were only laughed at. These drifts from the gullies were no laughing matter, and at the rate the snow flakes were coming down now, it would deepen with every minute.

An anxious whisper thrilled in Adela's ears. "Does *he* know of this? Are they doing it?"

She turned quickly to the child. "Who, dear?"

"The spirits that he talks to, and that go about with him. They are very strong, you know."

"No spirits can do anything to us, Emily, if we trust in God. His angels watch over His children, and you and I are safe under His care."

"Are we? But he said the spirits would always follow me if he sent them: and he has so many!"

"If he has, dear, there are more with us than with him. We must be brave and patient: and there is nothing to frighten us here but a little cold. You don't mind that?"

"Oh no, I am quite warm with your arm round me and Coco. I am so glad you are with me."

Some part of this whispered dialogue may have reached the ears of others, for the gentleman who had previously spoken, and who appeared to be a clergyman, began to tell stories of adventures in snow and ice, all bringing out heroic virtues of endurance and courage, and ending in timely rescue. Emily, listening silently, gradually sat upright, and ventured on a question or two; then allowed herself to be questioned in turn and drawn into conversation. Her belief in the Professor, her stepfather, and his spirits, was a simple matter of fact, so that she had no hesitation in answering the friendly enquiry as to what made her think of spirits in the snow. The Professor, she explained, could do a great many wonderful things, because the spirits helped him; sometimes he did the things in a large room when people came to hear him lecture; and sometimes he did them when he and she were quite alone together, and that frightened her very much indeed, because the spirits told her if she ever displeased him, or did anything he did not like, they would follow her about everywhere and make her miserable. She was very miserable at home, very; until she went to Dr. Thaddeus. Was she miserable now? Oh no: because she had Miss Granard to take care of her. Dr. Thaddeus had told her that nothing the Professor could do would hurt her while Miss Granard was by.

The kind querist had been striking a light while talking, and now held a tiny taper in his hand, by whose flickering ray Adela and her charge could see the strongly-marked features under the broad felt

hat, turned towards them with a kindly interest that was not without compassion. With a delicacy for which she was grateful, he contrived to change the conversation to other topics; and while drawing out the characters of both, to spare the elder what he guessed must be painful to hear. His kindness wonderfully beguiled the time; and when he had enquired into Coco's case, and made a suggestion for his comfort, Emily's confidence seemed to be quite won. She had never had a dog of her own before, she told the gentleman, and they could never have any pets at home, mamma said, because the spirits did not like them.

A warning touch of Adela's finger checked the poor child's communications, and the only reply of the stranger was in the form of a question.

"Then you still have your mamma, my dear?"

"Yes. Poor mamma sent me away till she shall be well again. She could not get well while I was there."

It was said in a tone of patient resignation, as if the fact had been accepted and submitted to; but Adela was not surprised that the stranger appeared perplexed and uneasy. He might, perhaps, have asked an explanation, but for the diversion caused by the appearance of the guard at the window, nearly up to his waist in snow, to assure them they were quite safe, and that assistance would soon come. The engine had got damaged in ploughing through the drift, and another had been signalled for. Some of the passengers had insisted on getting out, to make their way across the fields; but it was bad walking for ladies. If they would only wait a bit, some of the country people would be sure to come and help. Even while he was speaking lanterns were seen approaching; figures, armed with long poles, came plunging down the embankment, bringing an avalanche of snow with them. At the sight of the foremost, the clerical passenger, thrusting his head and shoulders out of the window, hailed him by name, and was immediately greeted in return.

"Splendid weather, isn't it, Archdeacon? Rare training for the Matterhorn! I wouldn't have missed it for twenty pounds!"

"Well, I would for ten: but tastes differ. Look here, Frankland, how is it outside for ladies? They say our engine has come to grief, and we shall be frozen while they are getting another."

"I am afraid there is nothing for the ladies but to get out, and trust to our carrying them through the worst of it. Once on the high road walking will be easy enough."

However, the other passengers in that carriage, two stout, elderly ladies, much preferred taking their chance, and sitting still, to any such rescue. What Miss Granard might have chosen, had she been alone, it is impossible to say; but Emily was already shivering with cold and nervousness, and the Archdeacon strongly advised their both availing themselves of the proffered assistance of this young man. He scrambled out himself first, and between him and Lewis

Frankland, for he it was, and the sturdy farm-labourers, they and about half a dozen more of the travellers were safely helped to a sheltered spot where they could feel the firm ground under their feet. The next question for Adela to decide was where they should go. Alternatives were suggested of station, farmhouse, and country town, the latter being quite two miles distant; the nearest farmhouse nearly one.

"It is for this child I am anxious," she said, when Lewis Frankland, who had contrived to extricate her small possessions from the carriage, came to see what he could do for them next; and by the lantern he had taken from one of the men, he had his first distinct view of the pale, frightened face of the younger stranger, and the extreme beauty of that bent over her in protection. The Archdeacon, who had shouldered his own portmanteau for a tramp through the snow to the town, spoke a few words to him in an undertone, to which Lewis eagerly assented.

"It is by far the best plan—the only one, in fact," muttered Frankland. And turning to Adela, he proposed their allowing him to conduct them to Comber Court, whose lights were visible among the leafless trees. It was the nearest place of shelter, he urged, and Sir Marcus and Miss Combermere would never forgive him if he allowed ladies to be in this difficulty without affording them hospitality. The mention of Sir Marcus's name removed all the scruples Adela might otherwise have felt, and she thankfully accepted the offer. Emily allowed herself to be carried by one of her deliverers, and Miss Granard, as she accepted the arm of Lewis, looked round for Coco.

"All right, ma'am," said a voice at her elbow. "I have got him, and the young lady's bag. I'll carry them up to the house for you."

Lewis felt his fair companion start. "Who is that?" she asked, hurriedly. "What voice is it?"

"I don't know," answered Lewis. "The boy was in the train with you, and helped me get out your things as if he knew all about them. There he goes, right before us; they are safe enough; I could catch him up in two minutes if he tried to give us the slip."

"Perhaps I was mistaken," Adela considered, and the difficulties of walking, notwithstanding the help of her guide, prevented further conversation. Thus they reached the Court. Emily's bearer set her on her feet at the door, and the lad who had brought Coco to London stood quietly waiting with him in his arms, the bag slung over his shoulder. The same lad, the same voice.

The party at Comber Court, which Lewis Frankland had quitted to join in the rescue of the travellers, as the reader may remember, did not gain in amiability by his absence. Mr. Bourne was always affronted when people volunteered to do disagreeable things in which he did not want to share; whatever he did being wisest and best, anyone who went beyond his mark ran into a foolish extreme.

Consequently, it was a personal annoyance to him, as he basked in the glow of Sir Marcus's noble fire, to reflect that Lewis Frankland was trudging through snow and wind, "just to have it said what a fine fellow he was." A few snarling replies to Mrs. Archdale's winning remarks decided that lady's tactics for the evening. She offered her son as an antagonist at Mr. Bourne's favourite game of chess, and devoted herself to the slow torturing of his lady at bézique. To see her best cards drawn out of her hand one by one, and transferred to the credit of a smiling enemy, without any opening being given for retaliation, was a trial to which nothing could accustom Mrs. Bourne, though it happened whenever she attempted to play. To make matters worse, if possible, Kate requested Miss Wilmot to try the piano, and having led the way with a short piece, persuaded her to favour them with a song. A flexible voice, and a good deal of confidence, had early accustomed Cecilia to an amount of applause with which it was difficult to dispense; and when two of her most popular and fashionable songs had failed to make Ernest look round, or to evoke more than courteous gratitude from Sir Marcus, it was time for her to find some pleasanter manner of passing the evening.

"No, no, Miss Combermere, it is very kind of you to be so indulgent to my poor attempts, but you have a much better musician at present eating the bread of idleness in that luxuriant corner. If you have a soul for real old music, played without book, you must ask Miss Medlicott."

"I am sure she means mischief," thought Kate, "but I'll disappoint her."

And, with due politeness, she begged the proposed favour of her guest, Sir Marcus enforcing the petition, and handing Miss Medlicott, nothing loth, to the instrument. Cecilia Wilmot contrived to murmur her comments in Kate's ear.

"Only good old classical music—none of your fal-lal operas and dances—requires a really fine taste to be appreciated. Very like a musical box—just six tunes, and all equally without expression—there goes No. 1." And as she spoke, Miss Medlicott, whose belief in her own excellence was quite equal to Miss Wilmot's, began a well-known tune, arranged as tunes formerly were for the behoof of beginners—so many bars of melody, and so many of variations. Sir Marcus listened politely from his arm-chair; and Kate, in defiance of Cecilia, begged for another piece, as soon as the first was finished, while Miss Wilmot turned to watch the bézique, and snatch Mrs. Bourne from the jaws of ruin. If her interposition did not quite turn defeat to victory, it at any rate made the battle worth winning; and Mrs. Archdale pleasantly observed that such an ally must be worth preserving at any cost: no wonder Mrs. Bourne made a point of securing her companionship.

"Indeed, you are quite right, ma'am," said Mrs. Bourne, con-

fidentially, as Cecilia moved away. "A very sweet girl—charming companion—likes a little gaiety—all girls do, you know—great responsibility—hope to see her well married—my husband most anxious about it—cares for her as if she belonged to him—more perhaps—"

"Just what I should have expected," interposed Mrs. Archdale, with the air of one who pays a deserved tribute to virtue.

"So kind of you to say so! My husband is the best and dearest—but girls will be obstinate sometimes, and so can he be. And unless he quite approves her choice—family, and good conduct, and all that, you know—he declares he'll give her nothing. Can you blame him?"

"Far from it, dear Mrs. Bourne. And should he approve?"

"Oh, the dear child, if she only pleases him in that, she may just have what she likes—he does nothing by halves. And what good will money do us when we are dead and gone, Mrs. Archdale? It won't bring us to life again."

"I hope not, indeed," was on the lady's lips, but she only shook her head and sighed, glancing as she did so at Cecilia's light figure, now bending over the back of Mr. Bourne's chair.

"Yes," she observed, as if thinking aloud, "she is very charming, and your friend, Miss Medlicott, has a delightful touch. It is many years since I heard anyone play that air."

"I was just thinking the same," said Sir Marcus: and, to Cecilia's amazement, his eyes were full of tears as he walked across the room to thank the performer. She had reminded him, he said, of some very happy hours of his life, on which he seldom ventured to trust his memory. "Aye, Kate," he added, as his daughter looked enquiringly in his face, "it was long before your time—never mind how long. If I lived to a hundred and ten I believe that tune would have power to move me. Hark! What was that?"

"Kate!" said a voice at the door.

Kate was there in a second; her father close behind her. And before Lewis had finished his hurried explanation, Sir Marcus was greeting Adela and her charge as if he had been expecting them all day. Even the mention of her name did not seem to be a surprise; and when she attempted an apology for such an intrusion, he stopped her with a loving look that made her feel at home at once. "I knew the sound of your voice," he said, "and at the moment I was thinking of your mother."

CHAPTER VI.

MOTHER AND SON.

"I DECLARE, papa, you know everybody under the sun. Who *is* this young lady whom you seem to have been almost expecting—and without giving me notice?"

The guests had been made cordially welcome to the use of Miss Combermere's room, with its glowing fire and comforts: and having left them in the hands of her trusty maid, who had private orders to disregard all scruples, and take care they did not keep a wet thread about them, Kate had hastened to superintend the spreading of such a supper as should do credit to Westmoreland hospitality—never to be taken unprepared. Sir Marcus woke out of a reverie at his daughter's words.

He could not, or would not, tell her much just then: only that Adela Granard was the daughter of a very lovely woman he had formerly known—aye, and admired. Everybody did admire her, and he was no wiser than the rest. The young lady had her mother's voice, and, as far as he could judge, a good deal of her beauty.

"It is to be hoped that Lewis is cooler in head and heart than I was at his age, or such an adventure would involve worse risks than cold or rheumatism," laughed Sir Marcus.

"I hope he is changing his wet things, notwithstanding."

"Never fear; Stephens is looking after him: and he is going to find a corner for a lad who helped to bring up the ladies' goods. It is not a night to turn a dog from the door: and the snow seems to be coming down thicker than ever."

"Well, father, we are not likely to be dull for want of visitors. I only hope we may be able to feed them all. It would be serious, indeed, if we had to put Miss Medlicott on half rations. She is to have one more refection before she goes to bed to-night, and another before she rises to-morrow morning."

"I hope Ernest Archdale is to have the same."

"Oh, he is in the other extreme—declines everything that is offered. I am afraid his mother worries him a little; she will keep watching and making signs to him, whatever he is about, and he looks sometimes as if he could hardly bear it. *I* should not venture to offer him an extra cup of tea."

"I'll see to him," said Sir Marcus; "he will know better than to be obstinate with me. Where do you put those young ladies, Kate?"

"In the pink room, next to mine."

"Mind you call me up if anything is amiss. That child's eyes tell their own tale. There is either mischief at work there already, or will be. They will have to take care."

"There will be mischief somewhere else, when Dandie finds out that they have got a lame spaniel. It must sleep in their room they say, or the child will be awake half the night."

"If all the world had Dandie's sense, one would know what to expect. Explain a fact to him, and he will accept it, but it is another matter dealing with old Bourne. He is affronted already because we are attending to other people. You must go in and smoothe matters presently, Kate, for I am sure those young ladies will go straight to bed after their tea."

Whether Kate would have succeeded in the smoothing process, had she set about it at once, we cannot say; but by the time she was at leisure to think of Mr. Bourne and his temper, the temper had got the upper hand. Her entrance, prepared to give cheerful explanations and interesting particulars, was the signal for him to pull out his watch, rise from his chair, and remind his wife that they ought not to keep anybody from other visitors, especially those who came unexpectedly at such an hour. He was afraid their own presence must be most inconvenient—intolerable, in fact—and no one regretted it more than he did. No, he thanked Miss Combermere all the same, he did not wish for wine and water, or anything that would give the least trouble; the servants and everybody had enough to do without that, and seemed likely to have, if young fellows were allowed to rush out at any hour of the night, and bring a crowd of people back with them. Young ladies? of course he knew that: it was not likely that so much trouble would have been taken for old ones. Old people were accustomed to be overlooked and put on one side, and he must again remind Mrs. Bourne that they had no right to keep anyone up.

In short, the burden of his address was so decidedly like that of the waiter in Mrs. Gatty's charming story, "Much better go to Bed!" that his submissive wife had no choice but to do it. Her example dispersed the party—the curiosity of the other ladies being slightly damped by the intelligence that one of the new-comers was a child, in apparently delicate health, and another, a lame dog.

"One, two, three patients and a half," whispered Cecilia, as she wished her hostess good night. "Don't make your La Garaye too pleasant, or some of them will be for staying too long!"

With her father's hint fresh in her mind, Miss Combermere had intended to keep on the watch; at any rate, for the first part of the night; but the fatigues of the day overpowered all such resolves, and she was in the depth of a sound sleep when startled into wakefulness by some noise she could not account for. A few moments of listening convinced her that it came from the apartment of the strangers, and that something there was so decidedly amiss that sleep and warmth must be abandoned for the present. Fortunately, her fire was not yet quite extinguished; and having hastily replenished it, and slipped on some of her clothes and a thick dressing-gown, she knocked cautiously at Miss Granard's door. It was opened, after a short delay, and Adela welcomed her with gratitude. She had not yet undressed, saying she had had letters to write, and the poor child had just awakened in a fit of hysterical terror, without any apparent cause. At the sight of Kate, she had tried to hide her face and stifle her sobs; but the next moment sat up in bed, gasping out that *he* was somewhere near—she was sure of it—he always said he should see her wherever she went, and he was looking at her now, and meant to take her back again. And though Adela folded her in her arms, and assured her no one could, or should, lay a finger

upon her, the dream, if dream it was, that had taken hold of her brain, remained too firmly impressed for any soothing. There was something about her whole condition that was unlike anything either she or Kate had ever seen before; and it was an unutterable relief to both when Sir Marcus appeared on the scene, and took the case into his own hands.

A few questions were all he put, and the answers only served to confirm his previous opinion. He sat down by the sobbing child, and by the magic, as it seemed, of his voice and touch, gradually calmed her nervous excitement. Emily's eyes lost their wild stare, and several long drawn sighs expressed a sense of relief from oppression. He kept his hand on her pulse, and talked to her in a low, quiet tone of confident authority, which evidently had a great effect, as she made no resistance to anything he ordered or proposed. The agitation passed off, the heavy eyelids dropped, and she fell asleep again: but he did not leave her side till he felt certain there would not be a relapse on awaking. He then ordered Kate back to bed, and recommended Miss Granard to follow her example. They would talk the case over in the morning. Adela promised compliance, and at the same time she gave him the letter of Dr. Thaddeus, which would make things clearer than any explanation of hers.

"You can understand now, Sir Marcus, why I was so anxious for your advice and help."

"I do, my dear; and I hope you understand that whatever a man can do to serve you, I will. Now get some rest, for you may do so in safety. She will sleep quietly, you will see, till morning."

When morning came, and Kate went down to make breakfast, she could not help thinking of what had been said in joke the evening before. The whole landscape was one sheet of white; and how heavy the fall had been was made evident by the vigorous efforts going on to clear a path on the terrace, under the supervision of Lewis. Supervision is a mild word, considering that he had worked harder than any one: but then work of this kind was play to him, and to the others it was very much the reverse. On seeing Kate at the window, he resigned his implement to a helper, and hurried in to make himself respectable for breakfast.

"Famous work for circulating a fellow's blood! I haven't been so warm since July's cricket match. If you ladies would only take a turn at the fun, you would leave off groaning at the cold weather."

"Who have you there at work besides our own people?" asked Kate, as she made the tea. "I thought I saw a new face?"

"You did, and rather a good-looking one. It is the lad who helped to bring the luggage up last night, and got a shake down for his trouble, or he might have been buried in a drift. You never saw such a monkey for jumping and climbing. Someone was wanted to clear the stable roof, and while we were talking about it, he was up like a cat, and played such antics in the snow the people

were all in fits. He has not the cut of a sailor, so I suppose he has been brought up on the tight rope."

"Do you know where he comes from?"

"He says he has been living in Germany, but his father is dead, and he wants a place in a gentleman's stable. I wish I'd got a stable! I would take him directly."

"What? Without knowing more of him than that? Can anyone give him a character?"

"I believe not—but what does that matter? Half the characters people do give are worth nothing, or they wouldn't be given so easily. How are your guests this morning? Have you heard?"

"Yes, they are coming down almost immediately. What an adventure you had, Lewis! Miss Granard is exceedingly handsome."

"I daresay she is, but I could hardly see last night. There is something a little queer about the young one, is there not?"

"What makes you think so?"

"The Archdeacon hinted as much, from what she had been saying. Didn't I tell you old Burleigh was in their carriage? Nothing would induce him to come on here; he tramped off through the snow as if he had been the curé of Saar."

"I am sure I am much obliged to him: if one more had come I must have sat up all night. He will call to day, no doubt."

"To tell you the truth, I expect he will. Considering the ladies were strangers, he seemed to take very great interest in them. I say, Kate: when a fellow has been at work before daylight his system requires generous living. At what o'clock do you breakfast?"

"We have been breakfasting, more or less, ever since we woke this morning. My first care was to order fires and food in all the bedrooms, as a chance of keeping the people alive. I am cherishing the hope that the weather may alarm some of them into an early flight."

"They must be quick about it then, for there is plenty more snow coming. I advise you to look after your larder and store closet: you may have to feed us all for a fortnight."

Kate shook her head emphatically. But as if to confirm these prognostications, the party had hardly begun to assemble when the snow came down with treble vigour, and Sir Marcus, to whom all appealed as an authority, gravely declined giving any opinion as to when it would stop. All he could assure his guests was that they were well victualled for a siege, and armed at all points against the enemy; only he must remind the ladies that, under such circumstances, they would all be under martial law, and the authority of the governor and his lieutenant would be supreme.

"The general good being the object, all individual gifts must be thrown into the common stock, you understand, for the benefit of the garrison," he added. "Mrs. Archdale's charming conversation—Mrs. Bourne's practical wisdom—those touching melodies of yours,

Miss Medlicott—Miss Wilmot's graces and accomplishments, too numerous for me to specify —"

"Oh, Sir Marcus!" expostulated several voices, while Lewis pounded the table, with an emphatic "Hear! hear!"

"The valuable reinforcement of last evening," continued the speaker, "will not be exempt from the duty imposed on all. If Miss Granard's continental experiences enlarge our ideas, her young friend's skill as a bird and dog doctress give me lively hopes of consultation about a patient of my own—a very old and obstinate bullfinch, whose case has been too much for me."

His eyes met those of Emily as he spoke, and he was glad to see how they brightened up. She smiled in his face, and then in Adela's; and Ernest Archdale, who had hardly noticed her before, observed the look and was struck by it. A good-natured enquiry after Coco led to a narrative of experiences about pet dogs, which soon won her confidence, and she found voice to answer and to put questions in return. Miss Granard was drawn into the conversation, and it soon appeared that they had some mutual acquaintance, and had a great deal to say to each other about them. By the time the protracted breakfast was over they had become very friendly; and Ernest showed no annoyance when Emily noticed his lameness, and innocently asked if it was "from a battle." He only said it was an accident, and if she could cure Sir Marcus's bullfinch, he should propose her trying her hand on him; and when Adela began a word of apology, assured her that he was touched instead of offended.

"She has a tender little heart, that cannot see pain without wishing to relieve it, that is all; and the quality is not so common that we can afford to quarrel with it. What is the use of a whip in your hand if you may not hit any thing? and it requires a little science to handle some whips at all, so there is the additional charm of being cleverer than your neighbours. Among your numerous accomplishments, Miss Wilmot," as, finding that young lady nearer to him than he had supposed, he turned to include her in the conversation, "did you ever drive a four-in-hand?"

She coloured furiously, and stammered something about a joke, which made him look at her in some surprise, and then quietly drop the subject. The strangers retired with Sir Marcus to his study; Ernest betook himself to the billiard-room, where there was an inviting bookcase and arm-chair, and was musing rather than reading when his mother came in, as she said, to see if he were not sitting without a fire. The little sigh which escaped him as he pointed to the crackling log in the grate, was his only mark of impatience, but she detected it at once.

"I am afraid I am very tiresome, my dear boy: but I suppose if you had only one thing in the world that you cared for, you would be a little anxious too."

"Dear mother, it only grieves me that you should be so fretted on

my account. You cannot wish for my recovery more fervently than I do myself. I am a nuisance to everybody."

"Do you really mean that, Ernest? I think I could contradict you, if it were necessary."

He looked up with a quiet smile and shake of the head. She smiled in return, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Mothers are supposed to hear and see nothing until the proper time comes for asking their approval; but they have a curious faculty of understanding what is neither said nor done. I am not going to scold you for discretion, but you will not tell me that Miss Wilmot is not a charming girl."

"Certainly not, mother; she is generally so considered."

"And with reason?"

"With reason: I see what you mean. And all I can say is that I admire her as much as I ever did—only without the expectation or wish of being admired in return."

"Too modest: but the fault in these days is rare. Now, my judgment has arrived at an opposite conclusion, Ernest."

"Too partial," said he, smiling, with a slightly heightened colour. "Indeed, my dear mother, you are for once mistaken. True, I had a dream, and it was sweet while it lasted, but she kindly awoke me: and, once fairly awakened, you know there is neither poppy nor mandragora that can medicine the vision back."

"You dreamed of happiness, and never breathed it to me!"

"I am very glad I did not, mother—as this was to be the end of such dreaming."

"But must it be so? My dear son, I have had more experience of woman's nature than you can possibly have; it may be that she has only lately found out the truth—it is often so with us. We are upbraided with changing our minds, when all the while we did not know them. I have not met anyone, for some time, so desirable as a connection in many ways; and her fortune is not large enough, I am happy to say, for you to be accused of wooing *les beaux yeux de la cassette.*"

"I always thought you would object to a small fortune, mother."

"Not where there is so much besides that is winning and suitable," said Mrs. Archdale, intrepidly, though her conscience pricked her sore at the untruth.

"And I know you dislike her friends. Or you must have altered your opinion very recently."

"Never mind that: I was wrong, no doubt; and they are excellent, worthy people, with only a few oddities and prejudices—and who is without such? Indeed, my dear, as you have named the subject, it is my sincere desire to see you make a friend of Mr. Bourne. His advice may be very useful, and a little attention from a young man to an elderly one is never out of place."

"You are quite right, dear mother; I will keep it in mind. But I candidly tell you he does not like being beaten at chess."

"Then don't beat him—what does it matter? Take your revenge on the next good player you meet, and let the poor dear man be happy while he can. And, Ernest, my dear, take care what you are doing; there may be dreamers like yourself, whom an unkind word from you may waken rudely, but whose dreams might become reality if you would think less of your offended pride and more of your honour."

"Honour, mother?"

"Yes, my dear boy, honour. What other term can I use, if you have allowed yourself to go so far without considering what might be the result of your turning back?"

She had the last word, for this appeal was not easily answered; and while he was still silent she quietly took a volume from the book-case and withdrew, leaving him to thoughts which bid fair to neutralise all the easy cushions of Comber Court.

He loved his mother dearly, and would have made any sacrifice for her comfort. There were few people in the world that he would admit equalled her in elegance of person or mental qualities; and yet—loving him with her whole heart as she did—she tortured him sometimes to a degree that he could hardly bear. Hate himself as he might for admitting such a thought, it would recur to him, after such a conversation as this, that there always seemed to be some hidden motive for everything that was to be done or left undone.

That he could, at her bidding, call back the glamour which had been on his eyes when he first saw Cecilia Wilmot, but which her coquetry had so thoroughly dispelled, he felt to be impossible; but that was not his mother's meaning. She meant him to look upon the matter from the points of interest and prudence, drawing her own conclusions from the regard Mr. Bourne seemed to feel for his ward. And in this she was only acting as many others did, and quite in accordance with the views of society in France, where she had been brought up. He had often heard it said, in terms of admiration, that Mrs. Archdale had the manners of the best French circles—in her case, hereditary, as her mother was one of an old Royalist line—but it chafed him when he detected, or fancied he could detect, the traces of a finesse against which his uprightness revolted.

She never took him into her confidence about her affairs, and was so skilful a manager in presenting a smooth outside to the world, that though he knew she was sometimes embarrassed, he believed there was nothing more serious in her circumstances than could be remedied by economy.

If he had, hitherto, been a burden on her limited means, he was to repay her tenfold as he rose in his profession, and could offer her a home in which she would reign supreme. That dream of which he spoke had shown him a vision of love and sweetness that was to make

her life happier, while it formed the bliss of his own. But it had never entered his head that either the home or the bliss could be purchased by the dower of his bride; and the fact that his mother should have breathed the word *honour* in connection with the subject, convinced him too painfully that she despaired now of his ever rising at all. All her hope in him now was to see him obtain a competence by a prudent marriage; and from that marriage, which had once seemed the summit of his earthly wishes, he shrank with an aversion that surprised himself.

Had his mother any special motive for urging him? That was the point that was most difficult to decide; and he had been harassing his brain in revolving it much longer than was good for him, when Stephens broke on his reverie by bringing him his portion of the day's mail bag, delayed several hours beyond its usual time by the state of the railway. Some of his letters, he found, had been following him about from place to place; and one, with the Paris postmark, had been several days on the road. An uneasy tremor seized him as he opened it. It was from Professor Dangerfield.

"Dear Archdale,—I am sorry to be troublesome, but it will be a great convenience if you can settle our little matter, which, to tell you the truth, has stood over rather too long already. A hundred and fifty down, and the same in three months, will do; but it is really too unbusiness-like to go on like this. If you would prefer my applying to headquarters, I shall take silence for consent. I hope you are recovering, and will soon be in the saddle again.

"Yours sincerely,

"Cosmo Dangerfield."

(*To be continued.*)

LADY JENKINS.

YOU might have heard a pin drop in the room. They were listening to the footsteps outside the door, but the footsteps did not make the hush and the nameless horror that pervaded it: the words spoken by Dr. Knox had done that. Old Tamlyn stood a picture of dismay. For myself, sitting in the window-seat, my feet comfortably stretched out before me, and partially sheltered by the red curtains, I could only gaze at them both.

Janet's footsteps died away. She appeared to have been crossing the hall to the tea room. And they began to talk again.

"I do not say that Lady Jenkins is being poisoned, absolutely, deliberately poisoned," said Dr. Knox, in the hushed tone to which his voice had dropped; "I do not yet go quite so far as that. But I do think that she is, in some way, being tampered with."

"In what way?" gasped Tamlyn.

"Drugged."

The Doctor's countenance wore a puzzled expression as he spoke; his eyes a far-away look, just as though he did not see his own theory clearly. Mr. Tamlyn's face changed: the astonishment, the alarm, the dismay depicted on it gave place suddenly to relief.

"It cannot be, Arnold. Rely upon it you are mistaken. Who would harm her?"

"Nobody that I know of; no suspicious person is about her to do it," replied Dr. Knox. "And there lies the puzzle. I suppose she does not take anything herself? Opium, say?"

"Good heavens, no," warmly spoke old Tamlyn. "No woman living is less likely to do that than Lady Jenkins."

"Less likely than she *was*. But you know yourself how unaccountably she has changed."

"She does not take opium or any other drug. I could stake my word upon it Arnold."

"Then it is being given to her—at least, I think so. If not, her state is to me inexplicable. Mind you, Mr. Tamlyn, not a breath of this must transpire beyond our two selves," urged Dr. Knox, his tone and his gaze at his senior partner alike impressively earnest. "If anything is wrong, is being wilfully and covertly enacted, our only chance of tracing it home is to conceal our suspicion of it."

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Knox," I interrupted at this juncture, the notion, suddenly flashing into my mind, that he was unaware of my presence sending me hot all over; "did you know I was here?"

They both turned to me, and Dr. Knox's confused start was a sufficient answer.

"You heard all I said, Johnny Ludlow," spoke Dr. Knox.

"All. I am very sorry."

"Well, it cannot be helped now. You will not let it transpire?"

"That I certainly will not."

"We shall have to take you into our confidence—to include you in the plot," said Arnold Knox with a smile. "I believe we might have a less trustworthy adherent."

"You could not have one more true."

"Right, Johnny," added Mr. Tamlyn. "But I do hope Dr. Knox is mistaken. I think you must be, Arnold. What are your grounds for this new theory?"

"I don't tell you that it is quite new," replied Dr. Knox. "A faint idea of it has been floating in my mind for some little time. As to grounds, I have no more to go upon than you have had. Lady Jenkins is in a state that we do not understand; neither you nor I can fathom what is amiss with her: and I need not point out that such a condition of things is unsatisfactory to a medical man, and sets him thinking."

"I am sure I have not been able to tell what it is that ails her," concurred old Tamlyn, in a helpless kind of tone. "She seems always to be in a lethargy, more or less; to possess no proper self-will; to have parted, so to say, with all her interest in life."

"Just so. And I cannot discover, and do not believe, that she is in any condition of health to cause this. *I believe that the evil is being daily induced*," emphatically continued Dr. Knox. "And if she does not herself induce it, by taking improper things, they are being administered to her by others. You will not admit the first theory, Mr. Tamlyn?"

"No, that I will not. Lady Jenkins no more takes pernicious drugs of her own accord than I take them."

"Then the other theory must come up. It draws the point to a narrow compass, but to a more startling one."

"Look here, Arnold. If I did admit the first theory, you'd be no nearer the light. Lady Jenkins could not obtain drugs, and be perpetually swallowing them, without detection. Madame St. Vincent would have found her out in a day."

"Yes."

"And would have stopped it at once herself, or handed it over to me to be dealt with. She is truly anxious for Lady Jenkins, and spares no pains, no time, no trouble for her."

"I believe that," said Dr. Knox. "Whatsoever is being done, Madame St. Vincent is kept in the dark—just as much as we are. Who else is about her?"

"Nobody much but her maid, that I know of," replied old Tamlyn, after a pause of consideration. "And I should think she was as free from suspicion as Madame herself. It seems a strange thing."

"It is. But I fear I am right. The question now will be how we are to set about solving the mystery."

"She is not quite always in a lethargic state," observed Tamlyn, his thoughts going off at a tangent.

"She is so more or less," dissented Dr. Knox. "Yesterday morning I was there at eight o'clock; I went early purposely, and she was in a more stupidly lethargic state than I had before seen her. Which of course proves one thing."

"What thing? I fail to catch your meaning, Arnold."

"That she is being drugged in the night as well as the day."

"If she is drugged at all," corrected Mr. Tamlyn, shaking his head. "But I do not give in to your fancy yet, Arnold. All this must edify you, Johnny!"

Tamlyn spoke the words in a jesting sense, meaning of course that it had done nothing of the kind. He was wrong, if to edify means to interest. Hardly ever during my life had I been more excited.

"It is a frightful shame if anybody is playing with Lady Jenkins," I said to them. "She is as good-hearted an old lady as I ever saw. And why should they do it? Where's the motive—the object?"

"There lies one of the difficulties—the motive," observed Dr. Knox. "I cannot see any, any end to be obtained by it. No living being that I know of can have an interest in wishing for Lady Jenkins' death or illness."

"How is her money left?"

"A pertinent question, Johnny. I do not expect anybody could answer it, save herself and Belford the lawyer. I *suppose* her relatives, all the nephews and nieces, will inherit it: and they are not about her, you see, and cannot be dosing her. No; the motive is to me a complete mystery. Meanwhile, Johnny, keep your ears and eyes open when you are up there; there's no telling what chance word or look may be dropped that might serve to give you a clue: and keep your mouth shut."

I laughed.

"If I could put aside my patients for a week, and invent some excuse for taking up my abode at Jenkins House, I know I should soon find out all there is to find," went on Dr. Knox.

"Arnold, why not take Madame St. Vincent into your confidence?"

Dr. Knox turned quickly round at the words, to face his senior partner and hold up his finger warningly. "Things are not ripe for it. Let me get, or try to get, a little more inkling into matters than I have got at present as touching the domestic economy at Jenkins House. I may have to do as you say later: but women are but chattering magpies; marplots, often with the best intentions; and Madame St. Vincent may be no exception."

"Will you please come to tea?" interrupted Janet, opening the door.

Miss Cattledon, in a sea-green silk gown that I'm sure I had seen

many times before, and the velvet on her thin throat, and a bow of lace on her head, shook hands with Mr. Tamlyn and Dr. Knox, and we sat down to tea. Little Arnold, standing by his mother in his plaid frock and white drawers (for the time to dress little children as men had not come in by many a year), had a piece of bread-and-butter given to him. While he was eating it the nurse appeared.

"Are you ready, Master Arnold? It is quite bed-time."

"Yes, he is ready, Harriet; and he has been very good," spoke Janet. And the little fellow went contentedly off without a word.

Miss Cattledon, stirring her tea at the moment, put the spoon down to look at the nurse, staring at her as if she had never seen a nurse before.

"That's not Lettice Lane," she observed sententiously, as the door closed on Harriet. "Where is Lettice Lane?"

"She has left, Aunt Jemima."

If a look could have withered Janet, Cattledon's was severe enough to do it. But the displeasure was meant for Lettice, not for Janet.

"What business had she to leave? Did she misbehave herself?"

"She stayed with me only two months," said Janet. "And she left because she still continued poorly, and the two children were rather too much for her. The baby was cutting her teeth, which disturbed Lettice at night; and I and Arnold both thought we ought to have some one stronger."

"Did you give her warning?" asked Cattledon, who was looking her very grimmest at the absent Lettice; "or did she give it you?"

Janet laughed pleasantly. "I think it was a kind of mutual warning, Aunt Jemima. Lettice acknowledged to me that she was hardly equal to the care of the children; and I told her I thought she was not. We got her another place."

"A rolling stone gathers no moss," commented Cattledon. "Lettice Lane changes her places too often."

"She stayed a good while with Miss Deveen, Aunt Jemima. And she likes her present place. She gets very good wages, better than she had with me, and helps to keep her mother."

"What may her duties be? Is she housemaid again?"

"She is lady's maid to Lady Jenkins, an old lady who lives up the London Road. Lettice has got much stronger since she went there. Why, what do you think, Aunt Jemima?" added Janet, laughing. "Lettice has actually been to Paris. Lady Jenkins went there just after engaging Lettice, and took her."

Miss Cattledon tossed her head. "Much good that would do Lettice Lane! Only fill her up with worse conceits than ever. I wonder she is not yet off to Australia! She used always to be talking of it."

"You don't appear to like Lettice Lane, ma'am," smiled old Tamlyn.

"No I do *not*, sir. Lettice Lane first became known to me under unfavourable circumstances, and I have not liked her since."

"Indeed! What were they?"

"Some of Miss Deveen's jewels disappeared—were stolen; and Lettice Lane was suspected. It turned out later that she was not guilty; but I could not get over my dislike to her. We cannot help our likes and dislikes, which often come to us without rhyme or reason," acknowledged Miss Cattledon, "and I admit that I am perhaps too persistent in mine."

Not a soul present, myself excepted, had ever heard about the loss of the emeralds: and somehow I felt sorry that Cattledon had spoken of it. Not that she did it in ill-nature—I give her that due. Questions were poured out, and she had to give the history.

The story interested them all, Dr. Knox especially. Just as Cattledon had put down her spoon to stare at Harriet, so he, absorbed in the recital, forgot his plate and cup, to stare at Miss Cattledon.

"And who did take them?" he asked.

But Cattledon could not enlighten him, for Miss Deveen had not betrayed Sophie Chalk, even to her.

"I don't know who it was," tartly confessed Cattledon, the point being a sore one with her. "Miss Deveen promised, I believe, to screen the thief; and did so."

"Perhaps it was really Lettice Lane?"

"I believe not. I am sure not. It was a lady: Miss Deveen told me that much. No; of that disgraceful act Lettice Lane was innocent: but I should never be surprised to hear of her falling into trouble. She is capable of it."

"Of poisoning somebody, perhaps?" spoke Dr. Knox.

"Yes," acquiesced Cattledon grimly.

How prejudiced she was against Lettice Lane! But she had given this last answer only in the same jesting spirit in which it appeared to have been put, not really meaning it.

"To be wrongly suspected, as poor Lettice Lane was, ought to make people all the more considerate to her," remarked Janet, her thoughts no doubt reverting to the time when she herself was falsely suspected—and accused.

"True, my dear," answered old Tamlyn. "Poor Lettice must have had her troubles."

"And she has had her faults," retorted Cattledon.

But this story had made an impression on Dr. Knox that Cattledon never suspected, never intended. He took up the notion that Lettice Lane was guilty. Going into Mr. Tamlyn's sitting-room for "Martin Chuzzlewit" when tea was over, I found his hand on my shoulder. He had silently followed me.

"Johnny Ludlow," he said, looking down into my eyes in the dim room, which was only lighted by the dim fire, "I don't like this that I have heard of Lettice Lane."

And the next to come in was Tamlyn. Closing the door, he walked up to the hearth-rug where we stood, and stirred the fire into a blaze.

"I am telling Johnny Ludlow that this story of Miss Deveen's emeralds has made an unfavourable impression on me," quoth Dr. Knox to him. "It does not appear to me to be at all clear that Lettice Lane did not take them; and that Miss Deveen, in her benevolence, screened her from the consequences."

"But, indeed," I was beginning, when Dr. Knox stopped me.

"A moment, Johnny. I was about to add that a woman who is capable of one crime can sometimes be capable of another; and I should not be surprised if it is Lettice Lane who is tampering with Lady Jenkins."

"But indeed," I repeated, "Lettice Lane did *not* take the jewels. She knew nothing about it. She was perfectly innocent."

"You cannot answer for it, Johnny."

"Yes, I can; and do. I know who did take them."

"*You* know, Johnny Ludlow?" cried old Tamlyn, while Dr. Knox looked at me in silence.

"I helped Miss Deveen to find it out. At least, she had me with her during the progress of the discovery. It was a lady who took the jewels—as Miss Cattledon told you. She fainted away when it was brought home to her, and fell on my shoulder."

I believe they hardly knew whether to give me credit, or not. Of course it did sound strange that I, young Johnny Ludlow, should have been entrusted by Miss Deveen with a secret she would not disclose even to her many years' companion and friend, Jemima Cattledon.

"Who was it then, Johnny?" began Mr. Tamlyn.

"I should not like to tell, sir. I do not think it would be right to tell. For the young lady's own sake Miss Deveen hushed the matter up, hoping it would be a warning to her in future. And I daresay it has been."

"Young, was she?"

"Yes. She has married since then. I could not, in honour, tell you her name."

"Well, I suppose we must believe you, Johnny," said Dr. Knox, making the admission unwillingly. "Lettice Lane did get fingering the jewels, it appears: you admit that."

"But she did not take them. It was—another." And, cautiously choosing my words, so as not to say anything that could direct suspicion to Sophie Chalk—whose name most likely they had never heard in their lives—I gave them an outline of the way in which

Miss Deveen had traced the matter out. The blaze lighted up Mr. Tamlyn's grey face as I told it.

"You perceive that it could not have been Lettice Lane, Dr. Knox," I said, in conclusion. "I am sorry Miss Cattledon should have spoken against her."

"Yes, I perceive Lettice could not have been guilty of stealing the jewels," answered Dr. Knox. "Nevertheless, a somewhat unfavourable impression of the girl has been made upon me, and I shall look a little after her. Why does she want to emigrate to Australia?"

"Only because two of her brothers are there. I daresay it is all idle talk—that she will never go."

They said no more to me. I took up my book and quitted the room, leaving them to talk it out between themselves.

II.

Mr. Tamlyn might be skilful in medicine; he certainly was not in diplomacy. Dr. Knox had particularly impressed upon him the desirability of keeping their suspicion a secret for the present, even from Madame St. Vincent; yet the first use old Tamlyn made of his liberty was to disclose it to her.

Tossed here, tossed there, in the conflict of doubts and opinions that kept arising in his mind, Mr. Tamlyn, from the night I have just told you of, was more uneasy than a fish out of water, his opinion perpetually vacillating. "You must be mistaken, Arnold; I feel sure there's nothing wrong going on," he would say to his junior partner one minute; and, the next, decide that it *was* going on, and that its perpetrator must be Lettice Lane.

The uneasiness took him out earlier than he would otherwise have gone. A slight access of fever attacked him the day after the subject had been broached—which fever he had no doubt worried himself into. In the ordinary course of things he would have stayed at home for a week after that: but he now went out on the third day.

"I will walk," he decided, looking up at the sunshine; "it will do me good. What lovely weather we are having."

Betaking himself through the streets to the London Road, he reached Jenkins House. The door of it stood open; and the doctor, almost as much at home in the house as Lady Jenkins herself, walked in without knocking.

The dining-room, where they mostly sat in the morning, was empty; the drawing-room was empty; and Mr. Tamlyn went on to a third room, that opened to the garden at the back with glass doors.

"Anybody here? or is the house gone a maying?" cried the surgeon as he entered and came suddenly upon a group of three people, all upon their knees before a pile of old music—Mme. St. Vincent, Mina Knox, and Captain Collinson. Two of them got up, laughing. Mina remained where she was.

"We are searching for a manuscript song that is missing," explained Madame, as she gave her hand to the doctor. "Mina feels sure she left it here; but I do not remember to have seen it."

"It was not mine," added Mina, looking round at the doctor in her pretty, gentle way. "Caroline Parker lent it to me, and she has sent for it twice."

"I hope you'll find it, my dear."

"I must have left it here," continued Mina, as she rapidly turned over the sheets. "I was singing it yesterday afternoon, you remember," she added, glancing up at the captain. "It was while you were up stairs with Lady Jenkins, Madame St. Vincent."

She came to the end of the pile of music, but could not find the song. Putting it in a stack on a side table, Mina said a general good-bye, escaped by the glass doors, and ran home by the little gate that divided the two gardens,

Captain Collinson left next. Perhaps he and Mina had both a sense of being de trop when the doctor was there. Waiting to exchange a few words with Mr. Tamlyn, and bidding Mme. St. Vincent an adieu that had more of formality in it than friendship, the captain bowed himself out, taking his tasselled cane with him, Madame ringing for one of the men-servants to attend him to the hall door. Tasselled canes were the mode then.

"They do not make a practice of meeting here, do they?" began old Tamlyn, when the captain was beyond hearing.

"Who? What?" asked Mme. St. Vincent.

"The captain and little Mina Knox."

For a minute or two it appeared that Madame could not catch his meaning. She looked at him in perplexity.

"I fail to understand you, dear Mr. Tamlyn."

"The captain is a very attractive man, no doubt; a good match, I daresay, and all that: but still we should not like poor little Mina to be whisked off to India by him. I asked if they often met here."

"Whisked off to India?" repeated Madame, in astonishment. "Little Mina? By him? In what capacity?"

"As his wife."

"But—dear me!—what can have put you upon such a notion, my good sir? Mina is a mere child."

"Old enough to get foolish notions into her head," quoth the doctor quaintly; "especially if they are put into it by a bewhiskered grenadier, such as he. I hope he is not doing it! I hope you do not give them opportunities of meeting here!"

Madame seemed quite taken aback at the implication. Her voice had a sound of tears in it.

"Do you suppose I could be capable of such a thing, sir? I did think you had a better opinion of me. Such a child as Mina! We were both on our knees, looking for the song, when Captain

Collinson came in; and he must needs go down on his great stupid knees too. He but called to enquire after Lady Jenkins."

"Very thoughtful of him, of course. He is often up here, I fancy; at the next house, if not at this."

"Certainly not often at this. He calls on Lady Jenkins occasionally, and she likes it. *I* don't encourage him. He may be a brave soldier, and a man of wealth and of family, and everything else that's desirable; but he is no especial favourite of mine."

"Well, Sam Jenkins has a notion that he would like to get making love to Mina. Sam was laughing about it in the surgery last night with Johnny Ludlow, and I happened to overhear him. Sam thinks they meet here, as well as next door: and you heard Mina say she was singing to him here yesterday afternoon. Stay, my dear lady, don't be put out. I am sure *you* have thought it no harm have been innocent of all suspicion of it. Mistaken, you tell me? Well, it may be I am. Mina is but a child, as you observe, and—and perhaps Sam was only jesting. How is our patient to-day?"

"Pretty well. Just a little drowsy."

"In bed, or up?"

"Oh, up."

"Will you tell her I am here?"

Madame St. Vincent, her plumage somewhat ruffled, betook herself to the floor above, Mr. Tamlyn following. Lady Jenkins, in a loose gown of blue quilted silk and cap with yellow roses in it, sat at the window, nodding.

"Well," said he, sitting down by her and taking her hand, "and how do you feel to-day?"

She opened her eyes and smiled at him. Better, she thought oh yes, certainly better.

"You are sleepy."

"Rather so. Getting up tired me."

"Are you not going for a drive to-day? It would do you good."

"I don't know. Ask Patty. Patty, are we going out to-day?"

The utter helplessness of mind and body which appeared to be upon her as she thus appealed to another, Mr. Tamlyn had rarely seen equalled. Even while listening to Mme. St. Vincent's answer—that they would go if she felt strong enough—her heavy eyelids closed again. In a minute or two she was in a sound sleep. Tamlyn threw caution and Dr. Knox's injunction to the winds, and spoke on the moment's impulse to Mme. St. Vincent.

"You see," he observed, pointing to the sleeping face.

"She is only dozing off again."

"Only! My dear, good lady, this perpetual, stupid, lethargic sleepiness is not natural. You are young, perhaps inexperienced, or you would know it to be not so."

"I scarcely think it altogether unnatural," softly dissented Madame, with deprecation. "She has really been very poorly."

"But not to induce this helplessness."

"She is seventy years of age, remember."

"I know that. But people far older than that are not as she is without some cause: either of natural illness, or—or—something else. Step here a minute, my dear."

Old Tamlyn walked rapidly to the other window, and stood there talking in a low tone, his eyes fixed on Mme. St. Vincent, his hand, in his eagerness, touching her shoulder.

"Knox thinks, and has imparted his opinion to me—ay, and his doubts also—that something is being given to her."

"That something is being given to her!" echoed Mme. St. Vincent, her face flushing with surprise. "Given to her in what way?"

"Or else that she is herself taking it. But I, who have known her longer than Knox has, feel certain that she is not one to do anything of the kind. Besides, you would have found it out long ago."

"I protest I do not understand you," spoke Madame, earnestly. "What is it that she *could* take? She has taken the medicine that comes from your surgery. She has taken nothing else."

"Knox thinks she is being drugged."

"Drugged! Lady Jenkins drugged? How drugged? What with? What for? Who would drug her?"

"There it is; who would do it. I confess I think the symptoms point to it. But I don't see how it could be accomplished and you not detect it, considering that you are so much with her."

"Why, I hardly ever leave her, day or night," cried Madame. "My bedroom, as you know, is next to hers, and I sleep with the intervening door open. There is no more chance, sir, that she could be drugged than that I could be."

"When Knox first spoke of it to me I was pretty nearly scared out of my senses," went on Tamlyn. "For I caught up a worse notion than he meant to convey—that she was being systematically poisoned."

A dark, vivid, resentful crimson dyed Madame's face. "Poisoned!" she repeated, in angry indignation. "How dare Dr. Knox suggest such a thing?"

"My dear, he did not suggest it against *you*. He and I both look upon you as her best safeguard. It is your being with her that gives us some sort of security: and it is your watchfulness we shall have to look to for detection."

"Poisoned!" reiterated Madame, unable to get over the ugly word. "I think Dr. Knox ought to be made to answer for so wicked a suspicion."

"Knox did not mean to go so far as that: it was my misapprehension. But he feels perfectly convinced that she is being tampered with. In short, drugged."

"It is not possible," reasoned Madame. "It could not be done without my knowledge. Indeed, sir, you may dismiss all idea of the

kind from your mind; you and Dr. Knox also. I do assure you that such a thing would be simply impracticable."

Mr. Tamlyn shook his head. "One, who sets to work to commit a crime by degrees, usually possesses a large share of innate cunning —more than enough to deceive lookers-on. I can understand how thoroughly repulsive this idea is to you, my good lady; that your mind shrinks from admitting it; but I wish you would, just for argument's sake, allow its possibility."

But Madame was harder than adamant. Old Tamlyn saw what it was—that she took this accusation to be a reflection on her care.

"Who is there, amidst us all, that would attempt to injure Lady Jenkins?" she asked. "The household consists only of myself and the servants. *They* would not seek to harm their mistress."

"Not so sure; not so sure. It is amidst those servants that we must look for the culprit. Dr. Knox thinks so, and so do I."

Madame's face of astonishment was too genuine to be doubted. She feebly lifted her hands in disbelief. To suspect the servants seemed, to her, as ridiculous as the suspicion itself.

"Her maid, Lettice, and the housemaid, Sarah, are the only two servants who approach her when she is ill, sir: Sarah but very little. Both of them are kind-hearted young women."

Mr. Tamlyn coughed. Whether he would have gone on to impar his doubt of Lettice cannot be known. During the slight silence Lettice herself entered the room with her mistress's medicine. A quick dark-eyed young woman, in a light print gown.

The stir aroused Lady Jenkins. Madame St. Vincent measured out the physic, and was handing it to the patient, when Mr. Tamlyn seized upon the wine glass.

"It's all right," he observed, after smelling and tasting, speaking apparently to himself: and Lady Jenkins drank it up.

"That is the young woman you must especially watch," whispered Mr. Tamlyn, as Lettice retired with her waiter.

"What! Lettice?" exclaimed Madame, opening her eyes.

"Yes; I should advise you to do so. She is the only one who is much about her mistress," he added, as if he would account for the advice. "*Watch her.*"

Leaving Madame to digest the mandate and to get over her surprise, he sat down by Lady Jenkins again and began talking of this and that: the fineness of the weather, the gossip passing in the town.

"What do you take?" he asked abruptly.

"Take?" she repeated. "What is it that I take, Patty?" appealing to her companion.

"Nay, but I want you to tell me yourself," hastily interposed the doctor. "Don't trouble Madame."

"But I don't know that I can recollect."

"Oh yes, you can. The effort to do so will do you good—wake

you out of this stupid sleepiness. Take yesterday: what did you have for your breakfast?"

"Yesterday? Well, I think they brought me a poached egg."

"And a very nice thing, too. What did you drink with it?"

"Tea. I always take tea."

"Who makes it?"

"I do," said Madame, turning her head to Mr. Tamlyn with a meaning smile. "I take my own tea from the same tea-pot."

"Good. What did you take after that, Lady Jenkins?"

"I daresay I had some beef-tea at eleven. Did I, Patty? I gene rally do have it."

"Yes, dear Lady Jenkins; and delicious beef-tea it is, and it does you good. I should like Mr. Tamlyn to take a cup of it."

"I don't mind if I do."

Perhaps the answer was unexpected: but Madame St. Vincent rang the bell and ordered up a cup of the beef-tea. The beef-tea proved to be "all right," as he had observed by the medicine. Meanwhile he had continued his questions to his patient.

She had eaten some chicken for dinner, and a bit of sweetbread for supper. There had been interludes of refreshment: an egg beaten up with milk, a cup of tea and bread-and-butter, and such like.

"You don't starve her," laughed Mr. Tamlyn.

"No, indeed," warmly replied Madame. "I do what I can to nourish her."

"What do you take to drink?" continued the doctor.

"Nothing to speak of," interposed Madame. "A drop of cold brandy and water with her dinner."

"Patty thinks it is better for me than wine," put in Lady Jenkins.

"I don't know but it is. You don't take too much of it?"

Lady Jenkins paused. "Patty knows. Do I take too much, Patty?"

Patty was smiling, amused at the very idea. "I measure one table-spoonful of brandy into a tumbler and put three table-spoonfuls of water to it. If you think that is too much brandy, Mr. Tamlyn, I will put less."

"Oh, nonsense," said old Tamlyn. "It's hardly enough."

"She has the same with her supper," concluded Madame.

Well, old Tamlyn could make nothing of his suspicions. And he came home from Jenkins House and told Knox he thought they must both be mistaken.

"Why did you speak of it to her?" asked Dr. Knox. "We agreed to be silent for a short while."

"I don't see why she should not be told, Arnold. She is straight-forward as the day—and Lettice Lane seems so too. I tasted the beef-tea they give her—took a cup of it, in fact—and I tasted the physic. Madame says it is impossible that anything is being given to her; and upon my word I think so too."

"All the same, I wish you had not spoken."

III.

THE soirée to-night was at Rose Villa; and Mrs. Knox, attired in a striped gauze dress and the jangling ornaments she favoured, stood to receive her guests. Beads on her thin brown neck, beads on her sharp brown wrists, beads in her ears, and beads dropping from her waist. She looked all beads. They were drab beads to-night, each resting in a little cup of gold. Janet and Miss Cattledon went up in the brougham, the latter more stiffly ungracious than usual, for she still resented Mrs. Knox's former behaviour to Janet.

"Where can the people from next door be?" wondered Mrs. Knox, as the time went on and Lady Jenkins did not appear.

For Lady Jenkins went abroad again. In a day or two after Mr. Tamlyn's interview with her, Lefford had the pleasure of seeing her red-wheeled carriage whirling about the streets, herself and her companion inside it. Old Tamlyn said she was getting strong. Dr. Knox said nothing; but he kept his eyes open.

"I *hope* she is not taken ill again! I hope she is not too drowsy to come!" reiterated Mrs. Knox. "Sometimes Madame can't rouse her up from those sleepy fits, do what she will."

Lady Jenkins was the great card of the soirée, and Mrs. Knox grew cross. Captain Collinson had not come, either. She drew me aside.

"Johnny Ludlow, I wish you would step into the next door and see whether anything has happened. Do you mind it? So strange that Madame St. Vincent does not send, or come."

I did not mind it at all. I rather liked the expedition, and passed out of the noisy and crowded room to the lovely, warm night air. The sky was clear; the moon radiant.

I was no longer on ceremony at Jenkins House, having been up to it pretty often with Dan or Sam, and on my own score. Lady Jenkins had been pleased to take a fancy to me, had graciously invited me to some drives in her red-wheeled carriage, she dozing at my side pretty nearly all the time. I could not help being struck with the utter abnegation of will she displayed. It was next door to imbecility. "Patty, Johnny Ludlow would like to go that way I think to-day: may we?" "Must we turn back already, Patty?—it has been such a short drive." Thus she deferred to Mme. St. Vincent in all things, small and great: if she had a will or choice of her own, it seemed that she never thought of exercising it. Day after day she would say the drives were short: and very short indeed they were made when I was there. "I am so afraid of fatigue for her," Madame would whisper to me anxiously. "But you take a much longer drive," I answered one day, "when she and you are alone. What difference does my being in the carriage make?—are you afraid of fatigue for the horses as well?" At which suggestion Madame burst out laughing. "When I am alone with her I take care not to

talk," she explained; "but when three of us are here there's sure to be talking going on, and it cannot fail to weary her." Of course that was Madame's opinion: but my impression was that, let us talk as much as we would, in a high key or a low one, that poor nodding woman neither heard nor heeded it.

Therefore, being quite at home now at Jenkins House, I ran in the nearest way to do Mrs. Knox's behest. That was through the two back gardens, by the intervening little gate; knocked at the glass doors of what was called the garden room, in which shone a light behind the curtains, and went in. Sitting near each other, conversing with an eager look on their faces, and both got up for Mrs. Knox's soirée, were Captain Collinson and Madame St. Vincent.

"Mr. Ludlow!" she exclaimed. "How you startled me!"

"I beg your pardon for entering so abruptly. Mrs. Knox asked me to run in and see whether anything was the matter, and I came the shortest way. She has been expecting you for some time."

"Nothing is the matter," shortly replied Madame, who seemed more put out than the occasion called for. "Lady Jenkins is not ready; that is all. She may be half an hour yet."

"I won't wait longer then," said Captain Collinson, catching up his flat hat. "I do trust she has not taken another chill. Au revoir, Madame."

With a nod to me, he made his exit by the way I had entered. The same peculiarity struck me now that I had observed before: whenever I went into a place, be it Jenkins House or Rose Villa, the gallant captain immediately quitted it.

"Do I frighten Captain Collinson away?" I said to Madame, on the spur of the moment.

"*You* frighten him! Why should you?"

"I don't know why. If he happens to be here when I come in, he gets up and goes away. Did you never notice it? It is the same at Mrs. Knox's. It was the same once at Mrs. Hampshire's."

Madame laughed. "Perhaps he is shy," said she, jestingly.

"A man who has travelled to India and back must have rubbed his shyness off, one would think. I wish I knew where I had met him before!—if I have met him. Every now and again his face seems to strike on a chord of my memory."

"It is a handsome face," remarked Madame.

"Pretty well. As much as can be seen of it for hair. He has enough hair for a Russian bear or a wild Indian."

"Have wild Indians a superabundance of hair?" asked she gravely.

I laughed. "Seriously speaking though, Mme. St. Vincent, I think I must have met him somewhere."

"Seriously speaking, I don't think that can be," she answered; and her jesting tone had become a serious one. "I believe he has passed nearly all his life in India."

"Just as you have passed yours in the South of France. And yet there is something in your face also so familiar to me."

"I should say you must be just a little fanciful on the subject of likenesses. Some people are."

"I do not think so. If I am I did not know it. I ——"

The inner door opened and Lady Jenkins appeared, becloaked and beshawled, with a great green hood over her head, and leaning on Lettice Lane. Madame got up and threw on a mantle.

"Dear Lady Jenkins, I was just coming to see for you. Captain Collinson called in to give you his arm, but he did not wait. And here's Mr. Johnny Ludlow, sent in by Mrs. Knox to see whether we are all dead."

"Ay," said Lady Jenkins, nodding to me as she sat down on the sofa: "but I'd like a drop of tea before we start."

"A drop of tea?"

"Ay; I'm thirsty. Let me have it, Patty."

She spoke the last words in an imploring tone, as if Patty were her mistress. Madame threw off her own mantle, untied the green hood, and sent Lettice to make a cup of tea.

"You had better go back and tell Mrs. Knox we are coming, though I'm sure I don't know when it will be," she said aside to me.

I had passed through the garden gate, when my eye fell upon Master Dick Knox. He was standing on the grass in the moonlight, near the clump of laurels, silently contorting his small form into cranks and angles, after the gleeful manner of Punch in the show when he has been giving his wife a beating. Knowing that agreeable youth could not keep himself out of mischief if he tried, I made up to him.

"Hush—sh—sh!" breathed he, stopping the question on my lips.

"What's the sport, Dicky?"

"She's with him there, beyond the laurels; they are walking round," he whispered. "Oh my! such fun! I have been peeping at 'em. He has got his arm round her waist."

Sure enough, at that moment they came into view—Mina and Captain Collinson. Dicky drew back into the shade and so did I. And I, to my very great astonishment, trod upon somebody else's feet, who made, so to say, one of the laurels.

"It's only I," breathed Sam Jenkins. "I'm on the watch as well as Dicky. It looks like a case of two loviers, does it not?"

The "loviers" were parting. Captain Collinson held her hand between both his to give her his final whisper. Then Mina tripped lightly over the grass and stole in at the glass doors, while the Captain stalked round to the front entrance and boldly rang, making believe he had but then arrived.

"Oh my, *my!*" repeated the enraptured Dicky, "won't I have the pull of her now! She'd better tell tales of me again!"

"Is it a case, think you?" asked Sam of me, as we slowly followed in the wake of Mina.

"It looks like it," I answered.

Janet was singing one of her charming songs: "Blow, blow, thou wintry wind:" just as she used to sing it in that house in the years gone by. Her voice had not lost its sweetness. Mina stood near the piano now, a thoughtful look upon her flushed face.

"Where did you and Dicky go just now, Sam?"

Sam turned short round at the query. Charlotte Knox, as she put it, had suspicion in her tone.

"Where did I and Dicky go?" repeated Sam, rather taken aback. "I—I only stepped out for a stroll in the moonlight. I don't know anything about Dicky."

"I saw Dicky run out first, and you went next," persisted Charlotte, who was just as keen as steel. "Dick, what was there to see? I will give you two helpings of trifle at supper if you tell me."

For two helpings of trifle Dick would have sold his birthright. "Such fun!" he cried, beginning to jump. "She was out there with the captain, Lotty: he came to the window and beckoned to her. I dodged them round and round the laurels, and I'm pretty nigh sure he kissed her."

"Who was?—who did?" But the indignant glow on Lotty's face proved that she scarcely needed to put the question.

"That nasty Mina. She took and told that it was me that eat up the big bowl of raspberry cream in the larder to-day; and mother went and believed her!"

Charlotte Knox, her brow knit, her head held aloft, walked away after giving us all a searching look apiece. "I saw Collinson call her out, and I thought I might as well see what he was after," Sam whispered to me. "I did not see Dicky. I wonder whether I ought to tell Dr. Knox? What do you think, Johnny Ludlow? She is so young, and somehow I don't trust him. Dan doesn't, either."

"Dan told me so."

"Dan fancies he is after her money. It would be a temptation to some people,—seven thousand pounds. Yet he seems to have plenty of his own."

"If he did marry her he could not touch the money for three or four years to come."

"Oh couldn't he, though," answered Sam, taking me up. "He could touch it the next day."

"I thought she did not come into it till she was of age, and that Dr. Knox was trustee."

"That's only in case she does not marry. If she marries it goes to her at once. Here comes Aunt Jenkins!"

The old lady, as spruce as you please in a satin gown, was shaking hands with Mrs. Knox. But she looked half silly: and, may I never be believed again, if she did not fall a nodding directly she sat down.

"Do you hail from India? as the Americans phrase it," I sud-

denly asked of Captain Collinson, when chance pinned us together in a corner of the supper-room, and he could not extricate himself.

"Hail from India!" he repeated. "Was I born there, I conclude you mean?"

"Yes."

"Not exactly. I went there, a child, with my father and mother. And, save for a few years during my teens, when I was home for education, I have been in India ever since. Why do you ask?"

"For nothing in particular. I was telling Mme. St. Vincent this evening that it seemed to me I had seen you before; but I suppose it could not be. Shall you be going back soon?"

"I am not sure. Possibly in the autumn, when my leave will expire: not till next year if I can get it renewed. I shall soon be leaving Lefford."

"Shall you?"

"Must do it. I have to make my bow at a levée; and I must be in town for other things as well. I should like to enjoy a little of the season there: it may be years before the opportunity falls to my lot again. Then I have some money to invest: I think of buying an estate. Oh, I have all sorts of business to attend to, once I am in London."

"Where's the use of buying an estate if you are to live in India?"

"I don't intend to live in India always," he answered, with a laugh. "I shall quit the service as soon as ever I can, and settle down comfortably in the old country. A home of my own will be of use to me then."

Now it was that very laugh of Captain Collinson's that seemed more familiar to me than all the rest of him. That I had heard it before, ay, and heard it often, I felt sure. At least, I should have felt sure but for its seeming impossibility.

"You are from Gloucestershire, I think I have heard," he observed to me.

"No; from Worcestershire."

"Worcestershire? That's a nice county, I believe. Are not the Malvern Hills situated in it?"

"Yes. They are eight miles from Worcester."

"I should like to see them. I must see them before I go back. And Worcester is famous for—what is it?—china?—yes, china. And for its cathedral, I believe. I shall get a day or two there if I can. I can do Malvern at the same time."

"Captain Collinson, would you mind giving Lady Jenkins your arm?" cried Mrs. Knox at this juncture. "She is going home."

"There is no necessity for Captain Collinson to disturb himself: I can take good care of Lady Jenkins," hastily spoke Madame St. Vincent, in a tart tone, which the room could not mistake. Evidently she did not favour Captain Collinson.

But he had already pushed himself through the throng of people and taken the old lady in tow. The next minute I found myself close to Charlotte Knox, who was eating cold salmon and bread-and-butter.

"Are you a wild bear, Johnny Ludlow?" she asked me privately, under cover of the surrounding clatter.

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"Madame St. Vincent takes you for one."

I laughed. "Has she told you so?"

"She has not told me: I guess it is some secret," returned Charlotte, beginning upon the sandwiches. "I learnt it in a curious way."

A vein of seriousness ran through her half-mocking tone; seriousness lay in her keen and candid eyes, lifted to mine.

"Yes, it was rather curious, the way it came to me: and perhaps on my part not altogether honourable. Early this morning, before ten o'clock had struck, mamma made me go in and ask how Lady Jenkins was, and whether she would be able to come to-night. I ran in the nearest way, by the glass doors, boisterously of course —mamma is always going on at me for that—and the wind the doors made as I threw them open blew a piece of paper off the table. I stooped to pick it up, and saw it was a letter just begun in Madame's handwriting."

"Well?"

"Well, my eyes fell on the few words written; but I declare that I read them heedlessly, not with any dishonourable intention; such a thought never entered my mind. 'Dear Sissy,' the letter began, 'You must not come yet, for Johnny Ludlow is here, of all people in the world; it would not do for you and him to meet.' That was all; I suppose Madame had been called away. I put the paper on the table and was going on into the passage, when I found the room door locked: so I just came out again, ran round to the front door and went in that way. Now if you are not a bear, Johnny, why should you scare people?"

I did not answer. She had set me thinking.

"Madame St. Vincent had invited a sister from France to come and stay with her: she does just as she likes here, you know. It must be she who is not allowed to meet you. What is the mystery?"

"Who is talking about mystery?" exclaimed Caroline Parker; who, standing near, must have caught the word. "What *is* the mystery, Lotty?"

And Lotty, giving her some evasive reply, made an end of her sandwiches and turned to the lemon sponge.

The rest has to come.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE CORNWALL AND DEVON COAST.

By Charles W. Wood.

CLOVELLY is certainly one of the most primitive villages in England. At some distance—a long distance in these days—from a railway station, it has remained very much of the world, unworldly. True, it has been found out by tourists, like every other known spot on the face of the earth, but they cannot ruin its beauty or take from it its distinctive character. Clovelly is a place that could not alter even if it would. It may safely challenge comparison. Consisting of one long, narrow street, called "Clovelly Street," the houses on either side small, irregular, nondescript, neither all house nor all cottage, each structure possesses a rustic individuality that marks it for its own. This one street is a rapid descent from the summit of the cliff to the very edge of the sea. Rude, rough steps, consisting for the most part of logs of wood let into the ground, are placed at short but irregular intervals from the top to the bottom, forming a sort of gigantic Jacob's ladder. Once in motion, it is not the easiest thing in the world to come to a halt. The pace, gradually increasing to a short run or trot, is only arrested by a sudden clutch at a friendly paling, or a desperate bolt into an open doorway. This makes Clovelly fatiguing for some people, impossible for others.

Clovelly is in reality a most lovely and picturesque spot. For once rumour and reputation have told nothing more than the truth. It seems to possess all the beauties of nature in one grand assemblage: perfection brought to a climax. The heights are richly wooded. Trees sway and bend their branches in answer to the wooing of the soft breezes, whispering their quiet love secrets to the vast expanse of blue water it is their privilege to guard: or, when the waves are high and raging, and the winds rush through them with the force of a hurricane, the lovelier mood is forgotten, and they are torn with fury, contending the whirlwind with the ocean.

Again, in the autumn, when the leaves are changing, the richness deepens into many gorgeous tints and tones, which keep the gaze spellbound and enraptured. Before and around lies the sea in all its beauty—and those who know can tell how varied and exquisite are the colours of these waters. Changing with every change in the sky, the surface of the sea is often enlivened by the Clovelly trawlers, who toil night and day to supply fish for the neighbouring towns, whilst you may at any time charter one of their little vessels for a day's cruising about the coast. The cliffs, here, are high and grand, whilst one fine headland after another rears its bold front to the channel. These cliffs are broken and rugged in many parts, and present a warm surface, softer and more richly wooded in the

immediate neighbourhood of Clovelly. Looking up at the village from the sea, one white house stretches above another, here suspended from the cliff side, like a cage hung on a wall, there nestling in foliage, roof looking on to roof. Clovelly is lovely from every aspect.

It was yet morning, when, after driving from Bude, we found ourselves in Clovelly Street, where no vehicle can pass. Z. protested: but great men and small alike yield to the inevitable. He stared in concern at the steep descent, at as much as was visible of the four or five hundred feet of steps that lead to the sea. Things are often realized only at the moment they become fact. And, by way of digression, this inability to realize things, to see clearly into the future, to feel and know beforehand what the time of fulfilment must bring: that such and such causes must produce such and such effects: is a by no means uncommon type of mind, though one of the most unfortunate that can be possessed, leading its owner through life into endless miseries and mistakes.

Before long we reached the New Inn, one of the most primitive of its kind, with staircases like ladders, and rooms that opened out of all sorts of little odd nooks and corners. A small inn, of which the most has been made. The one sitting-room upstairs was happily at liberty. Not that it was a particularly comfortable room, and for this reason. The landlady was a collector and dealer in old china, and her rooms overflowed with the very precious but very brittle commodity. When showing us over the collection, we walked from one room to another, and climbed up breakneck staircases into impossible lofts where Z. ventured not for his life, and in vain waited for the end. One room after another, and "still they came:" the store was inexhaustible. When at last we thought all was over, we were escorted across the narrow street to another room facing the inn, and forming part of the establishment—and of the collection. Our small sitting-room was brimming over with old china. It was hardly possible to move a chair, or turn round, for fear of damaging some costly object of vertu. The walls were almost invisible for the plates, dishes, and vases there suspended. Old Worcester, old Bow, old Chelsea, stared you out of countenance. Shepherds and shepherdesses made perpetual advances to each other, but never seemed to penetrate beyond the outer mysteries of courtship. It was a new and fresh experience. In a few hours the collection weighed upon us as a nightmare. A few days spent at the inn, notwithstanding the hospitality of its hostess, would have cured the most determined collector of old china of his mania. Every spot that could be made available to hang or to hold old china had so been utilized.

We were slightly amused here, and slightly disgusted, with a trifling incident, which may yet be inserted as a warning to all young men who do likewise. A youth, who probably had left his teens behind

him some two or three years, of the familiar and irrepressible order, had haunted our footsteps and done his utmost to attach himself to ourselves from Boscastle. With some slight pains, to preserve the laws of courtesy, he was dismissed from a personal attendance that threatened to become permanent. On arriving at Bude, the first thing to strike upon our vision, lounging on the steps of the inn, was the irrepressible youth, who treated us to a nod that would have done honour to the intimacy of a lifetime. Shortly after, when A. was alone in the sitting-room, he went boldly to the door, half in half out of the room, entered into conversation, and evidently re-

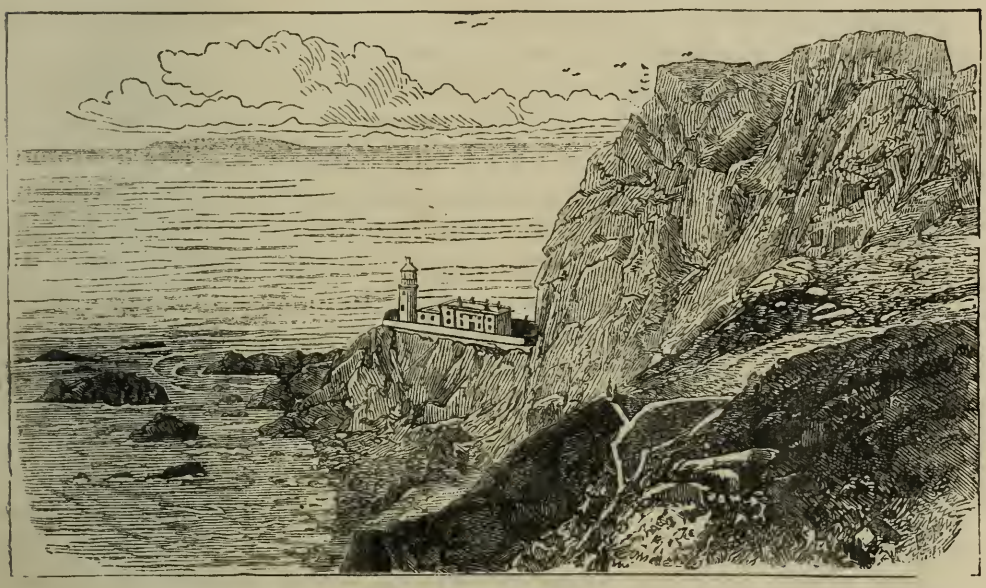
CLOVELLY.

quired but the smallest encouragement to take up his abode therein. Z. appearing, but not with the encouragement, he departed. A. laughed. "I quite expect," she said, "that he will turn up at Clovelly, and take actual possession of our sanctum."

So it happened. The youth had a harsh, unpleasant voice, and the first audible sound on arriving at the little inn at Clovelly was this identical voice, upraised in animated discussion. He soon found us out: and whilst I went down to the post-office for letters, A.'s prophetic words were fulfilled. Coolly mounting the staircase, he entered the sitting-room, sat down and enquired all round, like Mr. Toots, how everyone did—the everyone consisting of A. and Z. Unlike Mr. Toots, however, he manifested no signs of immediate departure. At last there was nothing for it but to ask the intruder

whether he was aware that the sitting-room was a private one. He was quite aware of it, and fortunately saved further trouble by withdrawing his charms and his impertinence to other and more distant quarters. Later on we saw him at the hotel at Ilfracombe, but how changed! Like a schoolboy who has been thrashed, he was meek and subdued, silent and discontented. Some one on whom he must have intruded his familiarity had evidently put him down with a vengeance, and with less consideration for his feelings than he had received at other hands.

Lunch ended, to make the most of the glorious day and the limited time, it was necessary to go out upon the water. This was the only way of seeing the cliffs to the best advantage. To decide is to act—we sallied forth. Once more Z. gazed in despair at the



HARTLAND POINT.

precipitous descent, the endless steps that led to the beach and the little harbour. It was no light undertaking. The white cottages on either side looked warm and cheerful in the sunshine, their rustic charm adorned by great tree-fuchsias and other flowers that grew before the windows. Here and there at an open doorway stood an old fishwife, dividing her attention between her knitting and the three toilers, who startled the quiet air with fun and laughter, whilst from one there escaped groans, protestations, and calculations as to how it would be possible to get back again. We passed the primitive post-office, which dispensed therewith the useful commodities of groceries and condiments to the general public. We had already struck up a good understanding with the post-master, who, doubtless out of respect for Z.'s distinguished position, and A.'s sunny countenance, honoured us with a profound bow as we journeyed. So, gradually, the flowers, and

the cottages, and the old wives were left behind, and we turned into the final and tortuous descent that leads to the harbour. Here a boat and boatmen awaited us, and we were soon on the waters of Bideford Bay.

A grand and lovely spot indeed. Before us, nested in wooded shelter and luxuriance, lay Clovelly, perched as it were on the side of the cliff; almost, as it seemed, suspended in mid-air. One wondered how the houses got there, or who first discovered the quiet and secluded spot. The cliffs towered majestically on all sides; here rich trees crowned the heights in regal splendour, there changing to more marked and barren surfaces, whilst the form of each headland cleaved the sky in distinct outlines. Towards Bude, far away on the one hand, stretching out into the sea, was Hartland Point, with its beautiful and well-built lighthouse; on the other hand the point of Morthoe, sheltering the famous sands, with their multitudes of rare shells, accumulations of centuries.

The sea, calm and blue, was a perfect reflection of the bright sky above; scarcely a breath of wind swelled the sails. The water surged lazily upon the beach, edged with white froth. The boatmen pointed out a treacherous spot where many a time the love of woman had gone down, to meet never again face to face, or "clasp hands close and fast" on this side the grave. But the men had work to do, as well as tales to tell, for the oars had to make up for the empty sails. We passed Bucksmill, a few houses nestling romantically in a cleft of rock, sloping upwards in a narrow ravine, wild with neglected tangles that only made it the more beautiful. A weird spot, emblem of solitude, suggestive of smuggling in bygone days, and, possibly, sterner deeds of bloodshed—many a dark night's work marked only in the eternal records. Far as the eye could reach the coast line was magnificent. Down opposite Hartland, ten miles distant, was Lundy Island—Lundi, Icelandic for puffin, being possibly the source whence it derives its name. If you visit the little island, with its wavy, undulating table-land, a contemplated sojourn of a few hours may chance to extend itself to days, or even weeks, so suddenly does the Atlantic change its ceaseless and monotonous roll into the fury of a prolonged storm and tempest.

The afternoon declined, the shadows lengthened, the glare of sunlight upon the water grew less dazzling; we turned homewards, and gradually got back to the white houses of Clovelly, scenes of quiet, uneventful histories, and made for the little pier. There we ran in amongst the herring-boats and landed on terra firma.

Yet I doubt whether we all looked upon it in that light. Like the Irishman, every step forward was in some sense two steps backward. If the descent had been troublesome, the return was a purgatory; something worse than a treadmill, where at least the steps are at equal distances from each other. Here no such regularity existed. It was more difficult to climb than the ladder of

life, which has not to be done all at once. Very steep, very arduous, very breathless work; but very enjoyable, very uncommon; full, brim-full and overflowing, with strange romantic beauty on all sides: creating feelings and impressions that belong to Clovelly alone.

But we were thankful that it was autumn, and that comparatively few tourists were about the village. True, the irrepressible youth was a host in himself, seeming to possess a ubiquitous presence and a voice to correspond; but he had disappeared for the moment and ceased to trouble us. In the full tide of summer Clovelly can scarcely be pleasant. The houses are so small, the rooms so closely packed together, that a crowd of visitors must bring with them a feeling of suffocation, and that dislike to too close a proximity to your fellow mortal that must not be mistaken for misanthropy. The time to visit Clovelly in perfection is when "brown Autumn spreads her store," when the tourists, like the swallows, have departed, and the leaves are changing into glowing, gorgeous hues; or, better still, in Spring, when all nature is in her first green freshness, when trees are opening into bud and leaf, and the birds are singing for gladness of heart at the coming of summer. There is, indeed, no season for travelling like the spring time of the year, when all is vigorous with new life and animation, when each day expands into later shadows and sunsets, and the melancholy that marks autumn finds no place to dwell in.

The inn at last, where the privacy and comfort of the little sitting-room were heightened by the "hard labour" lately undergone. True, the china figures stared at us with cold melancholy eyes from all sides, and the whole collection produced a feeling akin to pressure upon the brain: but there was a vacant table for dinner and three unoccupied chairs, small mercies for which we were duly thankful.

So the evening grew apace, and the sun went down and flooded earth, sea, and sky in a crimson light that intensified the beauty of the rocks, and gilded the tops of the trees, and boded well for the next day; twilight grew quickly into darkness, and the stars came out one by one, until the dark sky was spangled with its shining host, and silence and solitude reigned in the long Clovelly street.

An early breakfast the next morning. Z., to recover the previous day's fatigue, rested quietly at the inn, whilst A. and I went forth in search of Gallantry Bower and the fine coast walk. Quickly reaching the heights, we entered the splendidly wooded park belonging to Clovelly Court, and passed on into one of the loveliest walks in all England. Ancient trees surrounded us; the sunshine played with the changing leaves and chequered our path with fantastic lights and shadows. Far below, stretching out into the horizon, was the calm blue sea, never so beautiful as when seen from a great height. The line of coast twisted and turned us about: the way now leading to the very verge of the steep cliffs, now winding amongst the trees

that for a moment shut out the view. Gallantry Bower at last, and the limit of our walk. Here, indeed, was a magnificent sight. The cliff on which we stood was a perpendicular precipice, nearly 400 feet deep. Trees, gorse, rugged rocks, and brambled paths, all seemed to unite in showing forth the prodigality of nature. One headland after another presented its rocky surface and sharp outlines to the ocean, rising precipitously, or sloping in a more gradual descent as the case might be; Hartland Point, finest and boldest of all, terminating the scene.

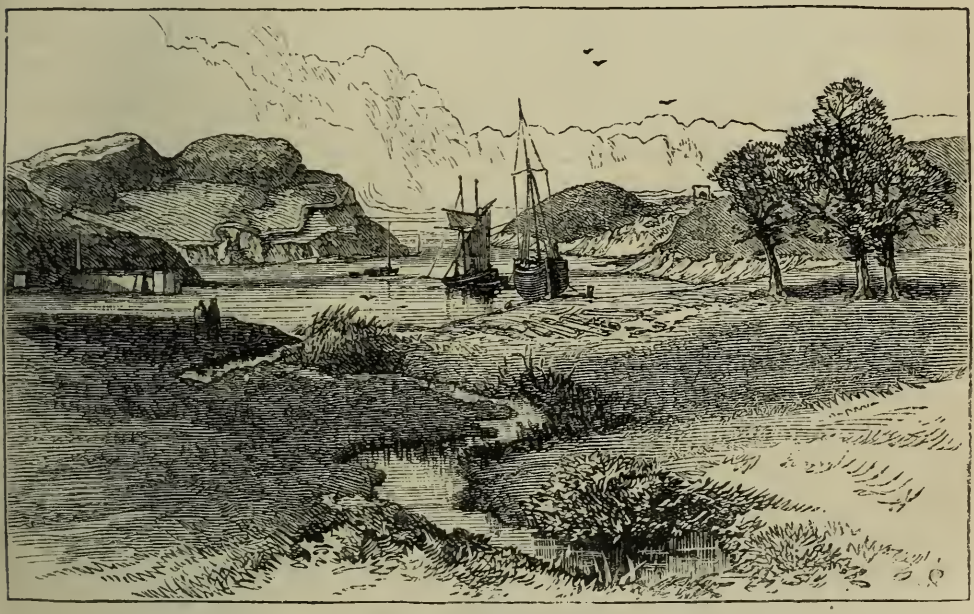
We sat long contemplating this wonderful view, until the ascending sun and shortening shadows warned us that it was time to return. Luncheon had been ordered for an early hour. Immediately after

HARBOUR, AND LANTERN HILL, ILFRACOMBE.

we were to start for Bideford, where we must leave the carriage and take train for Ilfracombe. Z. was patiently waiting our return, and the china shepherds were soon gazing upon a well-spread if frugal table. Thus fortified, and our thanks returned to the landlady for her hospitality (would that we could say as much for the civility of the niece who waited upon us), we climbed the height we had yesterday descended, and found the carriage at the entrance to the Hobby drive.

This drive through what is called the Hobby is one of the loveliest imaginable. It lay at the edge of the cliff, the grand sea below to the left hand. Trees overarched and embowered us, and glimpses of sunshine and blue sky rippled between, like streams of nature's laughter. This lasted for a considerable distance, until at length sea and wood were lost sight of as we turned inland. Late

in starting, the carriage dashed along the picturesque roads, with their high hedges; now through a quiet village, now past a well-kept park adorning a substantial mansion. At length we entered the strikingly situated town of Bideford. With its broad river flowing to the sea, the hills on one side sloping down to the banks of the stream, the town possessed so much that seemed markedly characteristic, that we regretted the impossibility of a longer sojourn. We crossed the long and beautiful bridge, dashed up the hill and were soon at the railway station. Here it was found that so much haste had been unnecessary; the train started nearly an hour later than the time stated at Clovelly. But we were off at last, and in due time reached Barnstaple, where we changed for Ilfracombe.



NEAR ILFRACOMBE.

The journey by rail was pleasant and picturesque, the approach to Ilfracombe with its surrounding heights, combes, and undulations, grand and imposing. It was almost dark when the train stopped and a fly conveyed us quickly to the hotel: a large building overlooking the sea and the rocks, but so noisy that the next morning we were glad to leave it for comfortable lodgings in Hillsborough Terrace. Here we intended to stay a few days, quietly spend Sunday, and see a little of such parts of the neighbourhood as did not lie in our direct route.

With Ilfracombe itself I was a little disappointed. Having heard its praises so constantly and eternally chanted as the very consummation of all that was lovely and of good report, I had dreamed no doubt of an earthly paradise. This it is not. The town seems to consist of one long, straggling, hilly street, many of the houses are

ugly and old-fashioned, and present a somewhat incongruous appearance: that of a place that ought to have remained a village, and has become a town.

It has its pleasing aspect nevertheless. A few steep side-thoroughfares lead rapidly to the sea and the hotel, where you are at once in the more ordinary elements of a fashionable watering-place. One of these thoroughfares admits into the covered market, filled with stalls of every kind of provision. A., with the curiosity that all gentlewomen who are worth anything betray for domestic concerns, compared town with country prices, not altogether to the disadvantage of the former: and dubbing me her factotum or esquire with a playful ceremony of knighthood, loaded her willing slave with fruit and flowers, all lovely and abundant.

Hillsborough Terrace is certainly the best and most favoured situation in Ilfracombe, and at No. 9 we were very comfortable. It is situated far up on the hill-side, and is thus bracing and quiet. The view from the windows was grand and magnificent. Before us, in all its beauty, stretched the sea; far below, the picturesque harbour, sheltered by the pile of rock that interposed between it and the ocean, called Lantern Hill, crowned by the lighthouse, a picturesque building resembling the ancient Roman-catholic chapel it once was, rather than a beacon for mariners. Yet the change is not so violent as it would seem; once a warning to pilgrims of the dangers of moral quicksands, rocks, storms and tempests that affect the souls of men, it has now become a signal for the preservation of their bodies from such physical disasters.

To our left hand lay the town, full of warmth and seeming repose; beyond it stretched a chain of undulating hills, broken into unequal and romantic outlines. To the right, boldly challenging the sea, a grand protection to the harbour, was a magnificent headland of rocky cliff, nearly 500 feet high, barren, gloomy, solemn, and most impressive. A winding path led to the summit, and on the Sunday we watched many a deluded couple in the heyday of youth and romance, wending their way to it, no doubt in a delicious dream of lovemaking, that through the medium of anticipation had probably gilded each hour of the past week.

If the actual town of Ilfracombe is not very uncommon, it certainly lies in the immediate neighbourhood of much scenery that must be seen to be appreciated. A panorama of hills and valleys, combes and orchards, with fertile slopes that occasionally verge on the majestic; whilst to the sea the cliffs present a huge, irregular, broken surface of rocks and chasms, often barren, rugged, and destitute of the rich foliage of Clovelly, but full of variety, and distinctly marked features. The Watermouth Caves, though perhaps disappointing as caves (they were so, at least, after a recent visit to the caves of Shetland), well repaid inspection as beauties of nature: whilst Watermouth Castle, with its flint walls here and there covered

with ivy, overlooked the water, an object at once picturesque and well placed. But the whole line of coast presents beauties impossible to enumerate in the space of a few pages, and the walks are a series of surprises and exclamations, as with every slight turn, the coast opens up in some fresh aspect. Much of it is lonely and solemn to a degree, and therefore the more to be sought by anyone wishing to escape for a season from the noise and crowding of a town to the rest and solitudes of nature.

Sunday we spent as in duty bound. In the morning we went to the Parish Church, situated amidst the hills at the other end of Ilfracombe. This we found much given over to so-called Ritualism, the clergy wearing vestments and using many forms unknown in our simple orthodox English ritual in the good old times, when people thought less of the outward signs and symbols of worship, and more of its inward effect, its results upon the daily life. For it is certain that the ceremonial must always exist and obtain at the expense of the spiritual. Most of the clergy on this Sunday morning were attired in curious vestments of various descriptions; whilst the preacher, on ascending the pulpit, produced an impression of being clothed in scarlet: dimly recalling to mind the dresses of the cardinals one is familiar with abroad, but hitherto unknown in Protestant England. In the evening we attended a church where simplicity perhaps was carried to the other extreme, but which, nevertheless, was refreshing and elevating after the morning's experiences.

It was a dark night, but calm and still when we left the church. As we gradually climbed the steep ascent leading from the town to the heights above, the dark canopy of the sky gemmed by its myriad stars, the sea rolling and surging in its boundaries, breaking at the foot of the gigantic cliffs, the gloomy, solemn outline of the rocks, seeming so full of weird mysterious meaning, apart from the mystery that night always possesses, we felt that the place held another influence for us than that of the day: distinct, apart, but not less full of the lessons Nature is ever teaching those who love to study her eternal problems.

Monday morning was bright and glowing; the same good fortune that had daily attended us, surprising and unusual at this advancing season of the year. The month was October, but the temperature was that of June. We drove to Morthoe: through the long street of Ilfracombe, past the old church, between the hills and dales out into the country. We appeared to be driving inland, yet were only bound to another part of the coast.—Morte Point, that stretching its arm out into the sea, helps to form Bideford Bay on the one side, Morte Bay on the other. At Morte village we had to quit the fly, and the remainder of the journey was rugged. A. and I walked, but Z. was persuaded to trust his life to a nondescript conveyance something like the original Bath-chair, drawn by a mild donkey of the same era,

who patiently trudged his weary way, unmindful of the beauties of nature, but evidently impressed with the fact that he had to work hard for his living.

There is a Devonshire proverb to the effect that Morte is the place on earth which Heaven made last and the devil will take first. No sign of bad taste, certainly, for it is a lovely spot. We wound round amidst a panorama of green fields, and sloping sand hills, and distant cliffs shutting in Morte Bay, the sea rolling lazily on to the beautiful

WATERMOUTH CAVES.

sands, yellow and white with myriads of shells for which they are famous. Shells yard upon yard deep, the gatherings of ages, crumbling away to inexhaustible stores of dust. We searched for rare specimens, of which A. was a collector and admirer, but found the perfect ones few and far between, even in this remarkable spot. Far out at sea the surf was breaking over the Morte Rock, or Death Rock, as it is called, from its terrible destruction to ill-fated vessels; whilst beyond, still might be seen Lundy Island, that, in these seas, seems to follow the traveller with the constancy of a familiar. Beyond all, the distance was bounded by the dark ranges of Exmoor.

It was a grand and lovely picture. We longed to walk on and

penetrate beyond that furthermost point, which would land us once more in the region of Bideford Bay, with the wooded heights of Clovelly for its crowning beauty. Z., in his triumphal car, took it all in with luxurious ease; now calling our attention to the picturesque creeks, or the sloping hills, or the distant ridges, which carried the eye far beyond into space, accompanying each remark with a wise or witty application, that flowed from him as naturally as the tide ebbed and flowed in its appointed hours.

We, too, had our appointed hours: and so the triumphal car was turned; proving a triumph indeed by turning without upsetting, to Z.'s infinite relief, and possibly the donkey's regret. We gave up looking for shells and gazing dreamily at the beauties of Morte, and commenced our climb to the village. There the fly awaited us. Soon we had left all behind, and were driving past combes, orchards, and green fields, through picturesque hedge-bound lanes, until once more we found ourselves in the quiet bustle of Ilfracombe; where the lace shops had more than once proved snares and delusions to A., and, in spite of the old proverb, had made her progress through the town slow indeed, but dangerous.

(*To be concluded.*)

LAST SUMMER.

"HERE you bid me rest content, low lying in the clover:
Here were anyone content with Edith sitting near;
But, and have you ever thought when summer-time is over
What is to become of me, who hold you very dear?"

"Summer-time?" she says and lifts her eyebrows in derision,
"Pray enjoy your summer-time, nor waste it in regret:
If you promise me to scrape your boots with due precision,
You can lie upon the hearthrug when the clover's wet.

"Are you not content to-day with all this sun and laughter?
December will be pleasant too, but now we have our June!
It is so like a man, you know, to think of what comes after,
And miss the freshness of the morn, the fulness of the noon."

* * * * * * *

Ah, Edith! you were wise to-day—be happy in the present!
June roses blow, June sunsets glow but once and not again;
Our June days past, December days can never be as pleasant:
'Tis only skies of bygone years that do not cloud with rain!

G. B. STUART.

ONE TERRIBLE CHRISTMAS EVE.

By Mary Cecil Hay.

I DON'T mention it to Deborah. I particularly avoid mentioning it to-day, though I may have done so now and then at other times, when it has struck me how conveniently her nervous headaches visit her. But though I don't mention it, the fact has never been borne in upon me so strongly as it is this afternoon of Christmas Eve. We certainly have had a good deal of trouble—and utterly in vain, so far—in looking over houses for the Soppendells; but then I should have thought Deborah would feel, with me, what a triumph it would be to find them the right one at last, and have them settled within reach of us. And this advertisement in to-day's *Times* is so very promising! It offers us exactly the house the Soppendells want, and in search of which we have taken so many fruitless journeys. And how nice it will be to add, as postscript to our Christmas letter, "We have found precisely the house you desire, and it will be ready for you early in the year."

"It will only be another disappointment," Deborah remarks, with an unworthy ingratitude, when I so exultantly tell her we must go at once to see and secure this house. "No advertisement ever tells the truth."

I don't contradict Deborah (though I sometimes do), because we really have been so very often lured to bootless fatigue by advertisements; finding, instead of the very pretty, mellowed, secluded house we want, only interminable rows of brick and mortar, or forgotten tenements redolent of mould and animalculæ. But in this advertisement I at once detect the ring of truth, and am determined not to miss such a chance. Besides, there is a comforting sort of sensation in being told to "apply to Mr. Lovely"—names augur much, I think. And Mr. Lovely offers exactly what we (and the Soppendells) want—"A picturesque detached residence, known as Sylvan Villa, charmingly situate in extensive pleasure grounds and fruit garden, in a salubrious suburb."

"Near church and station too, it says, and is not that an advantage, the station especially for Mr. Soppendell, and the church for Mrs. Soppendell! They will be delighted, Deborah," I say, putting down the *Times*, as there can be nothing in it of further interest to either of us. "And indeed there is nothing so attractive as individuality in one's dwelling. I don't wonder the Soppendells want a house that is not like everybody else's. Now we will go out and buy our Christmas-boxes, and after an early lunch we can go and see Sylvan Villa."

We have a very amicable arrangement, Deborah and I, about our Christmas-boxes. We buy each other exactly the same article. This might lead a casual observer to suppose the gifts are of no great advantage to us, but that would be quite wrong. We buy something which we should not otherwise have, and consider it an annual luxury, or elegance, which has fallen to our lot in quite an unexpected and promiscuous manner at this festive season. To-day we have decided on Honiton fichus for evening wear, and the selection takes us long, because of the ribbons—Deborah's complexion bearing a tint a shade warmer than mine will bear—but we choose at last to our entire satisfaction. Indeed, as we recall the fichus to our mind afterwards, and picture them on our new silks, though we say nothing personally flattering to each other of the costumes they will so elegantly complete, we are perfectly satisfied with the picture.

But who would think of the blow that is to fall upon me in this warmth and placidity when—after enjoying a little warm lunch, with a cup of tea—Deborah suddenly takes one of her nervous headaches, and declares she cannot go to see Sylvan Villa; no, not if I will crown her; which of course I have no intention (and, indeed, no power) of doing. I entreat her to make the effort; I appeal to her sense of duty, and then I reproach her like a mother; but nothing avails, and all that remains is for me to go alone. My only comfort is that in my own person I shall have earned the Soppendells' undivided gratitude; and I hope some innocent and natural means may be found of making them aware of this.

"I shall not be late, Deborah, and shall certainly bring good news," I say, while I arrange my bonnet at the glass. "But I do wish you were coming."

"You are not thinking of my head," sighs Deborah. And I'm ashamed to own that I am not: at that particular moment I am thinking of my own.

We live in Bayswater, Deborah and I, and I have to go to Victoria to take my ticket for the salubrious suburb. There is a train waiting for me when I reach the platform, which proves what a convenient line it is; and the carriage I enter is quite filled, which proves what a favourite direction from town is this in which I journey. I have no one to talk to, so I'm conscious now and then of a jerk, as if I were pulled up heartlessly, at about fourteen or fifteen, on the way towards forty winks. But really there is no incentive to me to keep awake, my fellow travellers being so uninteresting. It is difficult to me at any time to feel entertained by a row of gentlemen with newspapers before their poor shy faces, and all their care lavished on black bags, as is the manner of London gentlemen. It just a little surprises me to find that all the gentlemen, as well as all the newspapers and all the bags, have left me before I reach the salubrious suburb; but yet the fact soothes me, because it proves they are not hurrying in advance of me to seize on Sylvan Villa.

The station belonging to the salubrious suburb is a very clean and pleasant one, and I look round it approvingly before I leave it with brisk and hopeful step. Mr. Lovely's office, too, is particularly neat, and papered entirely, as it seems to me, with repetitions of his own attractive name, printed on sale-bills in a manner to inspire confidence in his connection. I find Mr. Lovely himself quite an engaging man—or it may be his clerk; I don't feel in a position to assert until after-dealings shall impress it upon me. He speaks feelingly about Sylvan Villa, and adds, with candour, that though several parties wish for the house, he will see that I have my chance. He apologises for not being able to send some one with me, but assures me I shall have no difficulty in finding the villa, or in opening the door, as he will give me the latchkey. And if his office should be closed when I return (as it may be, because they hope to leave business early this afternoon), I can drop the key into the letter-box, he says. I am grateful that all the other parties have brought back the key in time for me to have it, and I put it at once safely into my pocket, then stand at the office-door with Mr. Lovely for his directions, which are given thoughtfully and patiently.

Then I start off along a very pretty and quite countrified road, and walk for a long time undisturbed and comfortable. At last, just to make assurance doubly sure, I call in at a modest house on the way, to ask if I am going right for Sylvan Villa. The master of the house has to be extracted from a shed far down a garden before this question can be answered for me; and, indeed, he has to be released again and returned to his shed, still before the question is answered, because no one on the premises *can* answer it. They never heard of Sylvan Villa; but when I mention the road, a light breaks in upon them. They think if I go straight on; straight on past the church—a light breaks in upon *me* too at that word. Did not the advertisement say, "close to church and station"? I thank the collected household, and go smiling on my way.

The road grows wider and quieter. How pretty it will be in spring and summer! I am conscious of walking far, as well as fast, but then Sylvan Villa is near a station, and after my return I need do nothing more this evening. I shall enjoy a chop, or something comfortable with my tea, and then my own easy chair and the new annuals to read. If there is anything to be done needing exertion, Deborah can do it. Has she not had all the afternoon to rest? Here is the church. I pass it and go on, knowing I cannot be wrong now; yet I look out for a friendly passer-by, that I may ask how near I am to Sylvan Villa. But I only see a few young men at a tavern door, and my heart fails me in opening a conversation with them. The road is still a pretty one, but it slopes downhill now, so that the walk is not so inspiriting as it is uphill—at least, it never is so to me. But soon I forget all this, for before I have walked above

a mile beyond the church, I reach a gate, on which I can read the longed for words, "Sylvan Villa."

Ah! was I not right, and will not Deborah have to apologise to me? Can anything, in any London suburb, be more likely to please the Soppendells than this picturesque, ivy-covered house, shaded (as it will be in summer) by these old trees which stand so thickly in the damp winter garden all around me? Certainly the inhabitants of this house will not be—what the Soppendells so dread—overlooked by neighbours. Certainly here they will find the very refinement of privacy.

With real delight, I hurry to the door, taking the latchkey from my pocket as I go. It is a good front entrance, and when I have entered and taken the key out of the lock, I am pleased to hear how securely and unmistakably the latch catches. The lower premises are all good, though not in the best repair, for I notice a broken pane in one of the kitchen windows, and two or three loose boards. But I am not surprised, for the house has evidently been long untenanted.

Upstairs the rooms satisfy me as they do below, but it is such a new sensation to me to be alone in an empty house, that I hurry a little, hating the echoing sound of my own steps on the bare boards. There seems an open and extensive view from every window, and even the attics are pleasant rooms, though for my own part, if I were the Soppendells' maids, I should prefer the front one, because the back one has that senseless trap-door in the ceiling. Of course the agent will have the measures correct, but I would like to be quite sure, and I've brought my yard-ribbon to take the size of the chief rooms. I need not measure the attics, so I go down and into one of the back rooms on the upper story.

"What a capital house it is!" I say to myself, as I draw out my measure. "If the owner will undertake the few necessary repairs, it will be just the desire of the heart of the Soppendells. Suppose I had not seen that advertisement! Ah! but suppose"—this is the one cloud on my Christmas horizon—"all those other parties step in before me."

My furs, and my long rapid walk, make me warm even in this empty, unaired house, and on Christmas Eve; and as the air feels close, I cross the room to open the window. What a beautiful position the house occupies! The Soppendells can live here as thoroughly to themselves as if in a park of their own, and cannot even see a neighbour's house, or have the faintest fear of being overlooked. I am astonished to feel the wind blowing in upon me so lustily when I open the window (for as I walked I had scarcely noticed it), and before I take my hands from the frame, a sudden gust, passing me, blows-to the door behind me.

I hear it slam, and then something fall from it outside, and I look round in amazement. The door is latched tightly, and on this side there is no handle at all! How has it been? The handle

must have been off on this inner side, and the handle on the outer side, holding the shaft that turns the latch, must have fallen when the wind slammed the door. I stand watching it, helplessly, vacantly, not able even to believe what is so evident—that I am a prisoner in this room, doomed to spend the Christmas night in this empty, isolated house, in hunger, cold, and solitude. No; I cannot believe it. No; though I say the words over again and again to myself, in my utter stupefaction. My mind cannot yet grasp anything so horrible, though my lips repeat the doom in store for me, and my eyes see the fast-sprung lock.

I go to the window as my only hope, and lean from it, looking every way for help. But there is no human form in sight. I look far and near; then down below; then feebly up into the quiet winter sky; but what can come to my help? The large garden that has delighted me, is utterly silent and deserted; the meadows beyond, that seemed so good a boundary to this house, are a picture of wide bare emptiness. I look down and there are but bare trees swaying weirdly in the wind. I call, in a shaking, pausing, trembling way, and then listen, almost afraid of hearing any answering sound, yet trembling more when no other call breaks the silence. I call again—my voice growing stronger in my despair—and again. But what answer can I hope for? Who would be wandering, in such an hour, there beyond this faded, neglected garden? And even if any stray man did, could my call reach him there? Why had I not gone into a front room first? Then possibly my call might have been heard by some isolated passer-by. But here!

I cannot be still yet, in this beginning of my misery. I kneel at the door, and look helplessly into the hole from which the handle has gone. I put my pencil-case into it, imbecilely supposing it may turn the lock. I try again and again, most insanely, though the futility is so apparent to me from the first. Then I rise to my feet again and beat the door, while slow hot tears fall from my eyes, and I look stupidly down upon them on my dress, fearing even to wonder why they fall, because I so fear meeting the truth really face to face. I look round the bare walls vacantly, yet I notice that the paper has three poppies on it, one crimson, one pink, and one white—and I can scarcely see the white ones now.

I lean once more from the open window, for the world seems a little nearer to me so; and when I feel my voice is not muffled by my tears, I shout again for help. Waiting—waiting—in the silence that follows, and wondering what I can do. I feel nothing of the cold even yet, for my great fear has made me feverish, and I dread shutting out the living world if I should close the window. How far away can the nearest neighbour be? I cannot see any white poppies on the walls now. What shall I do? What shall I do? No answer, save the despairing echo of the question in my heart—what shall I do?

Why did I not make Deborah come with me? She ought to have come. She had no right to subject me to this. And the Soppendells had no right to lay such a task as this upon me. They never would if they had guessed Deborah was going to desert me at the critical moment. There she is now, in the warmth and light, knowing nothing about what utter solitude and fear can mean—I myself never knew it till now—sitting at our snug fireside, in her comfortable slippers, dozing probably over one of those Christmas books. Or perhaps she has the dear old doctor with her, and they are sipping tea, each side the blazing fire, in the convivial way I know so well, while he gossips as usual—just as if we were old women like himself. It makes it worse for me to picture them so. And, after all, the doctor may be visiting a very uncomfortable poor patient; and the fire may be very low at home; and Deborah may be feeling a chilblain; or her head may be really bad. But if—if they *are* chatting together as snugly as we sometimes do, they little dream of my—my own sob frightens me, as it bursts from my shaking form. It sounds so pitiful, and so like somebody else's sob.

Once more utter stillness settles down upon the house, and so unbearable is this to me, and I feel so afraid of my mind going, that I try to repeat lines and verses that may hold my thoughts. I daresay I have never learnt anything by heart since I left school, for there seems a sort of mingling and confusion among them. But I go bravely on, stopping only where memory fails.

"Ye Mariners of England,
That sit at home at ease,
How little do ye reck upon
The wreck upon the seas."—
"My name is Grampian! On the Norman hills my father feeds his flock;
And keeps his only son, myself, at home."—
"It was the schooner Hesperus,
And he held one of three;
'By thy long grey eye, and thy long grey beard,
Now wherefore hold'st thou me.'"—

I am going indefatigably on, when (without seeming actually to hear anything) I am conscious of the silence being disturbed by a faint creaking. In the first instant my heart gives a delighted bound, feeling it is a distant step outside, and that someone will presently come below the window, that I may throw the key down for him to rescue me. But in the next instant I know this sound is inside the deserted house, and is above me.

How can it be? I stand looking wildly up, just as there comes one heavy sound exactly over my head—the fall of a dead body! Ah! yes; it can be nothing else. I cannot move a limb. I stand motionless as that dead body above, in my overwhelming panic. This must be the re-acting of an awful tragedy which has been perpetrated in this ghostly house, and on this very spot, of course, where

I stand, and where the sound fell—the hollow, ominous sound; repeated, perhaps, in this terrible way, on every Christmas Eve. There would be the stains of blood here under my very feet, only have I not read that blood will not sink through carpets? and have not the carpets all been carefully taken up? Even on the walls there would be ghastly splashes under this new paper—Ah! the pink poppies now are undistinguishable there.

Is the ghostly tragedy over now, or are there spectral scenes to follow? I can only wait, too terrified to stir, for fear of even the faintest sound that I myself might make. Was it really I who had valued solitude and retirement—once? Shall I ever cease to hate both after this night? Ah! What is that? A stealthy, creeping step—a slinking, lurking sound of footsteps, that may be one, yet may be many, so softened and subdued, so cunning and so slow—over my head; upon the stairs; now in the lobby, just without my door, and pausing there.

In that moment my hair turns white!

Then—all my other fear seems to have been play beside this great tangible horror that has its grip upon me now—I hear a whispering outside my door, a low, suppressed whisper, rapid and eager.

I don't know how long it is—how can I ever count those minutes that hold years in their course?—when the voices cease, and the steps pass on, slowly down the stairs, to seek, as I know, a murderous weapon. My fingers grip each other till there is blood upon my hands, as if to fit me for my part in this ghastly scene of robbery and murder. Were they living men, or spectral forms? But whether men or forms, I know that their return will mark my last hour. In this feeling of certainty with regard to my impending fate, the long tension of my attitude gives way. My eyes close a moment, in the weariness of their strained gaze, and I walk once more to the window, in that pitiful effort to bring the world around me once again—for the last time now.

I have heard doors opening and closing below, and now a step is passing to and fro under the window. Before this (how many hours before this?) I had eagerly longed to hear an approaching step in the forsaken garden; yet, now that it is here—so unmistakably passing backwards and forwards below me—I dare not call, or make my presence known. It is not a ghostly step, so they are men and not forms, and, being men, how have they pursued me here? Certainly no living man could pass that outer door, as I secured it. They can only have emerged from that terrible trap-door in the attic ceiling. And now one of them has gone to the front of the house, and one is here at the back, that they may make my escape impossible. But need they fear, when I am so helplessly imprisoned in this room?

I dare not look out now, seeing in fancy the upturned murderous face which may meet my gaze. Yet it is too dark now to see it, however fierce and fiery the eyes may be; for not even the crimson poppies can be distinguished on the paper; and only the square of bare unshaded window breaks the darkness.

And time goes on, and the blackness of night is deepening around me, when gradually an awful thought forms itself on my mind—my poor wandering unsettled mind. This creeping step that I have followed, and the eager threatening whisper, belong to an escaped madman! A madman in whose power I am imprisoned, and may have to spend long and horrible days and nights perhaps, before he chooses to let his cunning violence culminate in my death. Have I not read of the fiendish delight with which a maniac will lengthen the torture of those who fall into his power? And who, from that outer fading world, can elude his crafty vigilance and come to rescue me before it is too late? Even afterwards, who will ever find my body to give it Christian burial?

And this is Christmas time; and Deborah is in ease and safety. Oh, why did I come? We have but each other—Deborah and I—why did I ever come away from her? Don't all sensible single ladies stay at home on Christmas Eve? Why don't all sensible single ladies stay at home for ever? It is so much safer. How cold it is now, and how late! It must at least be midnight—*only* midnight, yet a hundred nights seem to have passed since I had first so cheerfully thrown this window open, to see, with delight, that no human being's eyes could overlook us here. Ah me! have I ever really said that individuality is to be desired in a residence? Never again will I enter any house that is not propped on either side by twenty of its own twin brothers, and has forty of its duplicates opposite. No wonder this isolated dwelling is not taken. If the owner would make it beautiful from ground to roof, and then let it without a rent, would I let the Soppendells inhabit it? No: a thousand times, *No.*

Oh horror! There is a rustling of the bare branches of the tree outside the window, and a muffled angry voice cries, "I'm coming! So you thought I shouldn't find you, eh? I'm coming." And then goes muttering on, hoarsely and savagely.

I have crept back from the window, and am standing now against the opposite wall, my eyes wild and fixed, my breath coming in gasps; because I know this madman is climbing up to his final deed of bloodshed, and will soon step into the dark room, from that square of gloomy sky on which my glazed wild eyes are riveted. But no face appears there; and presently I hear a door closed beneath the open window, and two heavy bolts shot. Then I look out, with a new wonder. The bare tree has been stirred and rustled by a sudden shower of rain, which makes the night more dreary and more lonely even than it was before, and this heavy rain has driven

in again the madman who has been pacing before my prison. So now he will come up to me indeed, and this will be the end.

I hear the slow, sly step upon the stair—or many steps, I cannot tell, for there are voices muttering all the time, in that same savage threatening way. But I hear, too, that something heavy is being dragged up, and I know it to be the weapon for my murder.

I cover my eyes, and try to remember what I *ought* to think of in this dying moment; but I am only wildly wondering how soon that step can reach my door, and how this tale of bloodshed will be broken to poor Deborah.

Suddenly now; over the dreary pattering of the rain outside, and over every weird and muffled sound within; there sweeps a startling peal from some subterranean bell in this terrible house. I hear it distinctly, and feel the shock through all my icy trembling form. Then the whole house totters, and I become unconscious.

When my eyes open, the room where I have been so long in darkness, is lighted feebly, and a little weirdly, by a lean and poverty-stricken candle stuck in the empty grate. I am sitting on the floor, with my back against the wall, and my feet straight out before me, conscious only of one definite sensation—that of dampness in every garment and on every feature, and I am feebly conscious of being astonished that Deborah, who is kneeling beside me, should be damp too—Deborah being so particular about her dress. I think I slowly and sleepily begin to understand it a little, when I find that she is sprinkling water over me from the drawer of a kitchen dresser, which is held for her by the strangest object on which my eye can light—a stooping, feeble, shaking object, with hollow, wild eyes, looking out from long and shaggy locks of unkempt hair the very colour of pale ale.

I think Deborah is crying a little, when I turn my eyes from this strange sight; but I cannot be sure, because when I see it is really Deborah, and meet her pitiful eyes, and feel her hand, and know she has found me, I faint again.

But only for a little time, I think; because there falls upon me such a deluge from the dresser drawer.

"Don't tell me anything about it yet, Hephzibah; nothing, till we get home, and have had something warm and nourishing. To think what my nerves have undergone in tracing you, and having to cut out that advertisement for the cabman, and trust myself blindly to him to find the house, and he taking me all round deserts and forests before he brought me here! And to think that that wretched object of a man—you needn't look round; he went away when he saw you waking—to think he should have come in here through a broken window, for his night's rest—rest indeed, in an empty house, with only bare boards to lie on!—and should have heard you, and got into

the trap-door till he thought you were gone, and went to scare the cats—at least, that's what he seems to say, but he talks to himself, and I can't understand; and I'm quite sure he is as mad as a March hatter. And my nerves are in that state I don't know what anybody says. I've the cab at the door, and you are all right now, Hephzibah; a little damp perhaps, that's all; and I do hope this will be a lesson to you not to act in the eccentric way that is your delight, and wears me to a shadow. Tie your bonnet. I seem to hear that poor imbecile coming back, and I'm in that state of nerves that I cannot stand it; though if he hadn't been here to let me in, and hadn't thought of that dresser drawer to bring the water in, I really don't know what I should have done—or rather, what *you* would have done, Hephzibah—Where are you going now? For goodness gracious' sake do consider the state you've put me into, and don't be so spasmodic."

But I cannot help it. He looks such a feeble, helpless, harmless creature; shrinking back there in the empty hall; such a thread-bare, sickly shadow of a man; such a dazed bewildered object—gone astray not knowing how or when—that I cannot help it. It is such a little to do. There is no cab waiting to take him from this bare desolate house to a cheery fire-side. There is no warm, merry Christmas-day to dawn for him. Ah! it is such a *very* little thing to do!

"But most unwise," says Deborah—not knowing that I see her surreptitiously put back her purse, pretending she has never touched it—"most unwise." But she says it with unusual haste and jerkiness, and says nothing more until we are warm and safe at home; and—mellowed by a little chicken fricassee, and a glass of negus afterwards—I tell this story, and she listens.

"And so," Deborah says, when I have finished, and the negus (and other circumstances) have soothed and cheered us both a little, "your hair grew white in a single night, did it, Hephzibah?"

But Deborah has no right to smile; for it certainly would have grown white in that single night, if—well, if it hadn't been quite white before.

ONE AGAINST THREE.

An Episode in the Bosnian War.

Translated from a "Letter from the Seat of War," which appeared in the "Deutsche Zeitung," Sept. 22, 1878.

IT happened in the valley of the Sprecha, between Dolnja-Tuzla and Hau-Pirkovac. On the road, and on both sides, a furious conflict was going on, which spread itself by degrees into the neighbouring forest, whither the retreating Turks were hotly pursued by our men.

After an hour's skirmish, I suddenly remarked that I and a handful of brave fellows had separated ourselves from the rest, and although we still heard the sound of distant firing, we had entirely lost sight of our companions and of the Turks, with the exception of those who were directly ahead of us. Here we were, about fifteen men against nearly twenty Turks! My friend P—— called to me suddenly, in the thickest of the fight, to withdraw my men, as the Turks were in the majority, and we had gone too far from our centre. "A little while longer," I shouted, "and perhaps we shall receive help." The firing continued with the greatest rapidity; the balls struck the trunks of the trees, or flew hissing through the branches, which fell to the ground. Suddenly, as if by agreement, the firing ceased; the ammunition on both sides was exhausted. We faced each other with unloaded fire-arms.

No sooner did the Turks see that we, too, were without ammunition, than they sprang from behind the trees and fell upon us like wild beasts, shouting "Allah!" The foremost of our men beat down the scimitars they brandished with their bayonets; those in the rear began to run away. "Back! back!" I cried to my men. Those who remained surrounded me, and we retired as well as we could, facing the enemy when they approached too near. Soon one and then another of our company fell. But then came a misfortune. The wood suddenly brought us to a steep precipice, from which there was no escape. Here the Turks reached us. Their scimitars came down upon us like hail. Our square of glittering bayonets defended us well enough, while the Turks, dispersing themselves like a swarm of wasps, attacked us one by one.

Fighting with the courage of despair, we mounted again slowly; but the Turks pressed on us with such fury that we felt it was all over. In about ten minutes, only five of our men remained to face seven strong Turks! "Brothers, let us die gloriously; there is no help for us!" I cried, and threw myself, sword in hand, against my nearest opponent. My companions followed my example. Then ensued a short but terrible struggle. How it happened that I found

myself, all of a sudden, fighting with three Turks, I don't know; and I can't remember where and how my friend was killed. I only know that I ran—ran as fast as I could—knowing that cold death, in the form of three sharp scimitars, was behind me. If the Turks reached me, I knew they would cut me into a hundred pieces. I wondered that, running so furiously, I had time to repent having left our troops so far behind, that I had spent the last charge from my revolver. What was one sword against three scimitars sharp as razors? My head swam, my heart felt as if it would burst! But look! A help from God! Not far from me was an officer, with his head leaning against the trunk of a tree, mortally wounded, dying; but near him was my life, my only help—a revolver! In a moment it was in my hands, and I had taken up my position behind a tree. The revolver had six barrels, and was charged with four balls.

Suddenly the three Turks faced me with their menacing blades; between me and them was only the small trunk of a beech-tree, which was our mutual shield. Bang! went my revolver, and the nearest Turk rolled backwards on the grass. Bang! again, and the second Turk, who was trying to get behind me, uttered a wild cry. At this moment the third Turk, seizing him under the arm with the left hand, drew him, with Herculean strength, before him as a shield, and, covered in this way, he approached me with uplifted scimitar. My strength was almost exhausted. For the third time I fired, but the contents, instead of entering the body of my antagonist, lodged themselves in that of the shield-Turk. "You are lost!" I thought to myself; and springing from the tree which had so happily protected me until now, I ran a few steps farther, hoping to induce the Turk to throw away his shield, as I dared not spend my last charge on chance. So it happened. The Turk ran after me with the celerity of a wolf. But I was already behind a tree, and for the fourth time I fired. With eyes starting out of his head, my deadly enemy staggered; the scimitar fell from his hand; he sank, with a slight groan, to the earth.

I turned away with the reflection, "Where am I now?" "In the forest," was the answer. "Am I far from my company?" "Heaven only knows." How I got rid of my enemies I have related, but I was not yet out of danger.

Standing in the fathomless forest, I did not know if I were nearer to my companions or to those dreadful bloodhounds who, if they met me, would hew me to pieces with their swooping blades.

Meanwhile the sun began to sink, and it became darker and darker in the forest. An oppressive silence reigned on all sides; not a breath stirred—no sound of bird or animal. It was quite impossible to find my way in such a place. Vainly I took out my compass and tried to adjust it to our position; I put it back into my pocket no wiser than I was before. Nothing but some happy chance could bring me again into the right track.

Commending my soul to the Creator, I turned towards the four cardinal points. The west seemed to attract me. I felt as if a secret power drew me in that direction—as if an inward voice said, "There you will find deliverance."

I began, with great strides, to go in a westerly direction. Bushes, brambles, reedlike grasses stood in my way, but I overcame all obstacles; the sensitiveness occasioned by a peaceful life had left me. What to me now were the sharp brambles which tore my clothes and pierced my flesh? Soon the twilight deepened into night; I could hardly distinguish the trees, and only the stars, which looked sorrowfully down from on high, seemed to assure me that I was yet on earth. In this darkness I wandered about, from time to time stopping and listening for a human voice, but all was still.

Suddenly I remarked, notwithstanding the darkness, through a gap in the foliage, the form of a hill or a distant mountain. I could hear my heart beat; I began anew to run. In another half-hour I felt that I was ascending a mountain, the bushes became thicker, and there were no trees. Like a hunted animal I pressed on, crept, climbed, until I reached the summit. Then and then only I breathed freely and deeply; the feeling that I could at least look around me made me unspeakably happy. But the night—the night reigned here also, and shut out all sign of my companions. Ha! Is that smoke or fog? Do my eyes deceive me?

For a long time I stared in this direction, hardly daring to breathe, and the longer I looked the brighter shone the spark of hope, which fear had already nearly extinguished in my heart. . . . It was no fog, it was smoke!

I had soon descended the mountain and re-entered the forest, keeping steadfastly on in the direction of the smoke, for a quarter of an hour longer. I continued running on, hoping, longing to see again a human face. Then there was a noise in the bushes near me. I stopped quickly and listened. It seemed as if a man or animal were gliding through the brushwood. When I stopped the sound ceased. "Who is it?" I exclaimed, and grasped my sword, but as no answer came I concluded it must be an animal, a hungry wolf or a fox. I continued my way. A few steps farther, and the same sound was repeated, but nearer. Looking quickly round, I saw nothing, and redoubled my steps in the direction of the friendly smoke. Crack! the noise was close behind me, like the falling of broken branches. Quick as a weathercock I turned, and saw, not far from me, two glittering eyes, which disappeared immediately in the darkness. "A wolf," I thought! I don't know if I was right, but I felt consoled even with the idea that it was *only* a wolf that was pursuing me. And there, at last, was my long sought-for token! Never in my life have I experienced such a feeling of supreme delight as I did on seeing again those waves of curling smoke mounting to the heavens. A few steps more, and I should stand

by their burning source. On! on! what was exhaustion or fatigue, when deliverance was so near? In the foggy distance I saw a red light shimmering through the trees, at first small, like the fire of shepherds, then larger and larger. At last I saw several fires and men moving around them. But who were these men? Were they not perhaps those from whom I was fleeing? I shuddered with the thought, but nothing remained to me but to approach silently and cautiously near enough to observe who they were. As I approached within [illegible] dred feet of the nearest fire, I remarked, with terror, Turks [illegible] g on the ground, quietly smoking their pipes, as if they ha[illegible] finished some work pleasing to Heaven. My blood stood still in my veins, a cold perspiration covered my forehead. But this was not all. It is well known that the Turks possess many dogs, which accompany them during the night on their marauding excursions. Suddenly a great white dog, followed by several others, rushed at me, barking furiously. I seized my sword, and disappeared in a north-westerly direction. For nearly half an hour I was persecuted by the barking and howling of these dogs, until at last the sounds died away in the distance and darkness of the night.

I did not think of where I was going. I continued my way always farther and deeper into the forest, not daring to stop. Only once—it might have been midnight—I fell to the ground and began to sob and pray, and in tears and prayers I regained new strength. After this I climbed several hills, crept through many bushes and desert places, which looked as if they had never been trodden by the foot of man.

At last the morning broke. As I had outlived the night, I hoped the day would not see me perish. Forward, then! with renewed strength!

And I found my companions under the Pirkovac-Hau. Guided, as it seemed, by an unseen Hand, I had struck into the right path during the dark hours of the night. What joy for me to see my friends again! And what joy for them, too, who had already counted me among the dead!

EDGED TOOLS.

I.

MISS TABITHA TUNSTALL was accustomed to say that she always had her own way. She was also given to enunciate the principle that the effectual method of getting your way was to take it—and she took hers, she would add. Many of her friends but would have subscribed to the latter clause of the statement: therefore was it likely that this successful despot was going to be baulked in the dearest object of her life, her fondest aim, by a pair of foolish young people? Yet the foolish young people intended to disappoint her. Most hapless delusion!

Miss Tabitha Tunstall had arranged the destinies, and, let us in justice add, when need be, materially assisted in the settling in life of a large number of youthful relatives; but her supremacy in chief was reserved for her nephew, Herbert Tunstall, who lived at the Manor, farming a little, and hunting, fishing, and shooting a great deal; Miss Tabitha's design being that he should succeed her at Staineley Manor when she should be laid to rest. Her plans for him probably never reached further than this until an unexpected event suggested a new and delightful combination. This opportune occurrence was the charge of the daughter of a much-loved friend of her youth, a widow, who had lately died in Jamaica, commending her helpless daughter to Miss Tunstall's faithful affection. Miss Tabitha went to Southampton to meet the girl, Mildred Neil by name, took an immense liking to her on the spot, and instantaneously conceived the scheme of marrying her to her nephew. She brought her home, gave the young people one week in which to become acquainted, and then forthwith announced to each what she expected of them.

Herbert Tunstall sought an opportunity of speaking to Miss Neil upon the self-same day, and towards evening he observed the young lady seated alone upon a rustic seat in the garden. He at once crossed the lawn and seated himself beside her.

"I imagine that my aunt has told you, Miss Neil, of the hopes she entertains concerning you and myself," he said, with slow gentleness and care: then calmly awaited a reply.

Mildred Neil was a handsome girl of the brunette type: swift to feel, her face was a mirror for the representation of her emotions; and Mr. Tunstall now read his answer in the angry spark that flew to her eye, in the crimson flush that shot across her cheek before her tongue could utter a word of her indignation.

"I am astonished at your speaking to me on the matter, Mr. Tunstall; you must be aware how worse than useless it is."

"But it is necessary that I should speak to you, Miss Neil."

"Mr. Tunstall, it is impossible that I should ever regard you in any other light than as a friend."

"Miss Neil, deep and sincere as my respect for you must be, I have not the slightest wish that you should regard me in any other light; still ——"

"In plain words," cried the girl, interrupting him, "I do not want to marry you."

"In plain words," echoed he, with a different inflection, "*I* do not want to marry *you*."

Upon that unflattering assertion Miss Neil looked up in surprise; and, their eyes meeting, they both burst out laughing at the absurd nature of the dispute.

"Then why—why talk upon a subject that is so very—very,"—the young lady hesitated for a moment for a word to express her sentiments—"so very disagreeable?"

"Miss Neil, you have declared your indifference towards me, and thereby of course thrown me into the depths of despair and humiliation; will you now go further, and in strict confidence make a full confession—do you love anybody else?"

Mildred Neil thought for a moment, wondering whether an incipient fondness for a certain young curate, born of unlimited flirtation upon his side, might be dignified by the name of the grand passion; but concluded to the contrary. "N—no," she said at length, lamely.

"That 'no' came too hesitatingly to establish perfect innocence," commented the young man, laughing. "I am going to set you an example of candour by pleading guilty. I am engaged to a young lady, a clergyman's daughter in the neighbourhood; and I want your help, Miss Neil."

"This is interesting," said the girl, sitting up and looking at him with attention, quite ready for a little romance, so that she was not expected to take the part of heroine.

"My aunt does not smile upon my choice."

"She is aware then of your engagement?"

"Not exactly aware of an engagement existing, but she suspects the state of things. The fact is she walked into the room one day when Mary was—was ——"

"Yes, I am attending," said Miss Neil, with demureness. "Was what?"

"As we were talking earnestly," said the young man, with palpable untruth.

"Precisely; a little conversation would of course criminate you."

"Well, I might have been holding her hand," Mr. Tunstall amended, with more flagrant mendacity.

"I understand: go on."

"So she made a fuss; it was uncomfortable, especially for Mary. But she will get over her prejudice after a while. She cannot fail to do so—you shall see Mary!" cried the lover, enthusiastically. "And

for the present, to gain time for Aunt Tabitha's unreasonable prejudice to melt, you will not mind our appearing, you and I, to fall into her wishes."

"Our appearing to fall into her wishes. What do you mean?"

"Why," he answered, laughing, "by each of us professing to be diligently cultivating a regard for the other."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the girl, with a faint blush. "And it would not be right."

"I don't know about its being right, but it is necessary. You have not the experience of Aunt Tabitha that I have: she is quite capable of sending for a ring and a parson, and having us married upon the spot, if we showed any symptoms of insubordination."

Mildred looked impressed by this terrible picture, as Mr. Tunstall intended she should be.

"As you like, though," he resumed. "I am sure," with an ironical bow, "I ought to feel more than resigned."

"But I should not feel at all resigned," said Miss Neil, quickly.

"You will be safe then only in the way I suggest: and certainly our one chance of a quiet life lies in letting Aunt Tabitha suppose that we are falling into her views."

"Will not such a course at all events be rather—*awkward?*" suggested the young lady, her feminine mind foreseeing embarrassments.

"On the contrary, I think it will be extremely amusing."

Had Mildred Neil been older, she would probably neither have consented to the arrangement nor have found any fun therein, but as it was, her youth and innocence helping her, their assumed characters became a source of immense amusement to Mildred and to Herbert. After dinner, before her cup of tea and game of backgammon, Miss Tabitha, with her cap well on one side, would ostentatiously settle herself for a nap, telling the young people they might talk what nonsense they pleased, she was not going to listen, and in fact she was growing rather hard of hearing.

Upon which Herbert would saunter off to the remote regions of the piano, saying:

"Come and practise that duet, Mildred; you are aware how important it is that our voices should get into perfect harmony."

Or Miss Neil would bid Mr. Tunstall wind her wools. "It is your duty to attend upon me, you know. I must get you into domestic training." And the discipline would occupy so much time that it was clear Herbert Tunstall stood in great need of the lesson.

The amount of practice which they had no doubt accounted for it; but it was astonishing how well these amateurs soon came to play their parts. Any outsider watching that duet-study carried on in the solitudes of the far end of the drawing-room would have said that it was genuine interest which was kindling in Mildred's dark eyes: that it was some feeling near akin to love which was thrilling in his tones

and lending warmth to his words. But of course the performers knew differently: they were well aware that it was all part of an excellent jest, and the semblance of reality that their acting wore was altogether to their credit.

Miss Neil was naturally anxious to behold the girl, the true beloved, for whom she stood proxy; but for some time after her own arrival at Staineley, Miss Cubison was absent upon a visit. At length, however, her curiosity was gratified. One bright autumn afternoon, as Herbert Tunstall and she were returning from their ride, they met a young lady in one of the lanes about Staineley. She was walking slowly, and, mild though the day was, Miss Neil noticed that she was enveloped in furs, while in her hand she carried a small basket.

"Here comes a good little district-visitor!" cried Mildred.

"That is Mary Cubison," said Mr. Tunstall, and he sprang from his horse.

After himself greeting the girl, he brought her up and introduced her to Miss Neil, who observed with a quick throb of pleasure, for which she would have found it hard to account, the ordinary nature of the rival whom she had been picturing as a species of goddess. Miss Cubison was truly one of those people best described by the word inoffensive. Inoffensive in speech, look, manner, mind, and character, Mary Cubison was absolutely without a salient point. After a few minutes' chat, during which the young ladies had decided with perfect unanimity of opinion that the afternoon was bright, the autumn a mild one, and the lanes about Staineley muddy but pleasant, Mr. Tunstall bent over towards Mildred, saying:

"If you don't mind, I will see Miss Cubison home."

"Of course I don't mind; pray do so," was the answer; but for her life the speaker could not have kept a certain coldness out of her tones.

"Do not enter the park—wait for me; I will not be ten minutes," Herbert whispered eagerly in return.

"Ten minutes! I suppose that means half an hour or more while they are talking inane nonsense at the Parsonage gate," said Miss Neil, as drawing out her watch she prepared to time the lovers: and twisting round in her saddle she gazed after the pair with a sad and weary expression upon her own beautiful features. She could only see that Herbert Tunstall walked quietly by the side of the young lady, from whom he had taken the basket, which he was carrying in one hand, while with the other he led his horse.

The hand of her watch had scarcely completed the ninth minute when Miss Neil heard the sharp ring of hoofs on the road behind her. She pocketed her watch hurriedly, and turned to greet Herbert with a flush of guilt upon her cheek, but with a smile of pure unmixed pleasure upon her lovely lips.

"Well!" he ejaculated in a tone of interrogation, meeting her

smile with one of equal brilliancy on his own face, as he rode up to her side.

"You've not taken more than your ten minutes," she said, in her confusion stating the very fact that she had hastened to conceal, that of her having marked the length of time he had been gone.

Herbert Tunstall seemed also to labour under a scarcity of ideas; but, after a slightly embarrassed pause, he brought out the information: "Mary is not very well; she took cold at the house where she has been staying. They had a fashion there of walking in the garden of an evening."

Ah! a month or two ago how quick Mr. Tunstall would have been to have noticed the consciousness in Mary Cubison's manner when she spoke of these evening walks; and how that embarrassment deepened into guilty confusion upon his carelessly chiding her for her neglect of her delicate health! How her blushes and stammering excuses would have set his hot blood on fire with jealous suspicions eight or ten weeks back; and now, now they pass unobserved.

"Forthwith any quantity of lover's rhapsodies for my entertainment!" exclaimed Miss Neil to herself. Aloud she remarked, "Miss Cubison does not look very strong."

"No, she is far from robust," said Tunstall, with almost a sense of discontent as the contrast between her organization and the generous vitality of Mildred Neil's nature was forced upon him. "It begins to grow dark already: winter is creeping on us," he added, and with that the subject of Miss Cubison was dismissed, as though of no interest.

II.

Time glided smoothly along until the fifteenth of December, when the annual subscription ball of Tarnford, the neighbouring market-town, was to take place. This event taken alone was not a very remarkable occurrence, but this particular ball was to have a special distinguishing feature. It was to be graced by the presence of Miss Tabitha Tunstall, who was going, she said, to take care of Mildred Neil. Mildred Neil was delighted, only feeling a little anxiety in addition as to her chaperon's apparel. Miss Tabitha's ordinary garb was a dress of brown holland in summer, and linsey-woolsey in winter, the skirt made of a convenient length to "clear the ground," according to Miss Tabitha's own report. It did clear the ground: it likewise cleared the tops of her boots, when that lady walked after her energetic fashion. Out of doors she invariably carried in one hand a stout umbrella, which served many useful purposes, notably to prod up weeds as she perambulated her domains, to give force to her remarks, and to thrust away her pet animals when they became too demonstrative in their affection. Her grey hair was still abundant; but it was her custom to wear a lace cap, which always inclined

with shameful favour to one ear or the other: a high linen collar bucklered her throat, beneath which a coloured ribbon was knotted, and the probabilities were that the tie she had worn the previous day was hanging idly down her back; so that in time quite a "bunch of ribbon"—not "blue," but of all the colours of the rainbow—would be in suspension there.

When Mildred Neil first came to the Manor she made an attempt to rectify some of these harmless little peculiarities. "Aunt Tabitha,"—under Miss Tabitha's orders she had so called her from the beginning—"Aunt Tabitha, your cap is all on one side, let me put it right," Mildred would say, leaning over in affectionate readiness.

"No, my dear, thank you: I must have given it a knock; by-and-bye it will get one on the other side, and then it will be straight."

"Aunt Tabitha, the tie you wore yesterday is still fastened to your collar, I will take it off."

"No, my dear, thank you: it will come in handy for to-morrow."

Now it was impossible to conjecture what a lady with such independent views might consider to be appropriate ball-going costume. When the subject was first broached, Mildred had inquired point blank of what her attire for the occasion was to consist, but Miss Tabitha had declined to satisfy her curiosity. Therefore, although no weaker-minded than the bulk of mankind, it was not without a certain feeling of trepidation that Herbert and Mildred awaited her appearance upon the important night. Both ready early, they had been some time in the hall when at length Miss Tabitha's brisk step was heard descending the stairs.

"Oh! you dear beauty!" exclaimed Mildred, running forward to the foot of the staircase to meet her—and her ecstasy was not unjustified, for Miss Tabitha was magnificent in rich brocade and priceless old pointlace, while a cap and feathers crowned her head with mathematical precision: at least that was its proud position for the present; the length of time that it would be retained was a question for the future to solve.

Miss Tabitha, as pleased as any girl at the compliment, stooped and kissed Mildred's upraised face.

"You are a picture; no one will look at me beside you," cried Mildred, surveying her afresh. "But where are your gloves, dear?"

"Gloves! what do I want with gloves? I am not going into the cold to get my hands chilled, or into the sun to scorch them."

"It will look curious," said Mildred, with a little mournful shake of the head, as she lifted the members in question with her own small hands. "Do put on a pair of gloves!" she finished, pleadingly.

"No, I shall not: my hands are as they were made," said Miss Tabitha, with determination.

"No, aunt," said young Tunstall, laughing, "they are not. They are as you have made them with a lot of weed-spudding and calf-feeding, and Heaven knows what besides."

"And if they show that they have done a little honest work—" Miss Tabitha was beginning warmly, when Mildred's soft voice struck in.

"They are beautiful hands; for they are always ready to serve and to help," cried the girl, and she stooped hastily, and, with a pretty, natural gesture of reverence, pressed her fresh young lips upon the stiff old fingers, which she yet held in hers. "They are useful, kind, true, lovely hands, and she shall go with them as she likes," Mildred ended, and, loosing her clasp, she stepped back to her former position beside the blazing hall-fire.

"There, there! Run away to Parker, and get me a pair of gloves, blue, green, red, yellow, anything you like!" exclamed Miss Tabitha, brushing a tear from her eyes. "I declare you young people are making a perfect fool of me in my old age: I shall not have a will of my own soon."

"You need not be alarmed—that day is not very near," said her nephew with a laugh.

The gloves brought and assumed, the carriage was ordered round, as the time was getting on to ten o'clock, and they had a drive of four miles before them.

"You will give me the next two dances," said Tunstall, possessing himself at once of Mildred's card, upon their arrival at the Assembly Rooms, and coolly writing down his name in accordance.

"You may have the first, but not the second," Miss Neil replied, in her turn taking out her pencil and drawing it through one of his autographs.

"Well, then, when may I have another?"

"Any one that you choose towards the end of the evening."

"The eighth then," said he with an air of resignation; "I hope that will satisfy you."

"No, but there is the sixteenth, a waltz: you may put your name down for that, if you like."

Their first dance over, the pair were standing beside Miss Tabitha, when she said suddenly, addressing Herbert: "Who is the stranger with your friend, Miss Cubison? He is a great deal better looking than you are, Herbert," she added with apparent inconsequence, but Mr. Tunstall perceived the significance of the concluding remark.

"I do not see the Apollo, Aunt; but why do you ask?"

"Because they are lovers; that is all."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Herbert, with a keen feeling of annoyance at the remark, for which he would have found it difficult to account. "You are making a mistake.

"No mistake; I have a foolish enough pair of lovers always before my eyes for me to know the signs now."

Mildred and Herbert both looking up startled, their glances met, but at once sank again quietly to the ground. A deep flush spread itself over her face, as she turned her head away: Herbert Tunstall was scarcely less confused than she was; but the music striking up at that moment, to escape Miss Tabitha's keen vision, he passed his arm round Mildred's waist, and whirled her off in the dance: Miss Tabitha looking after them with a curious expression. They had scarcely, however, made two circles of the room when Herbert drew his companion out into the corridor, which had been decorated and furnished with seats for the occasion.

"It is the truth," he said abruptly, as soon as they were alone. "You are dearer than life to me. Mildred, I love you."

Mildred Neil gave one frightened glance up into his face; then made answer with deliberation, but her voice had an odd quiver in it the while she spoke.

"Of course!" said she, giving a little uneasy laugh. "But we are alone now, so we can lay aside our parts."

"Would to Heaven that we had never assumed them!" was Tunstall's cry, and Mildred's heart with a groan answered "Amen."

"We have played out the play in earnest enough," he resumed. "So far as I am concerned, it has been played out in most dolorous earnest. My darling! my darling! I love you ——"

"Stay! not another word!" exclamed Mildred, arresting him yet more peremptorily by laying her hand upon his arm. Then turning round, her young face lighted by noble feeling, and with her eyes full upon his, she cried courageously: "And suppose we have played out the play in dolorous earnest, and made shipwreck of our happiness, our happiness only. What then? There remain honour —justice—right—truth!"

Herbert Tunstall gave her one long look, as she stood there. Her slight girlish figure was robed in its ballroom frippery of tulle and laces, a slender chain of gold and pearls encircled her soft throat, and white jasmine blossoms wreathed her hair; but immutability of purpose, a steadfast cleaving to what she would esteem the right, were to be traced in the bearing of the queenly head, in the earnestness of the dark eyes, in the firm lines of the sweet mouth. In absolute silence they returned to the ballroom, a stormy sea of mixed emotions surging in his breast; and her face, now that the glow of passion had died out of it, looking weary and mournful. At Miss Neil's desire he conducted her to Miss Tabitha, and he then withdrew to seek solitude wherein to compose his mind after the events of the past half-hour. A steady pacing in the cool night air without the building had a tranquillizing effect, and when he felt he could again bear the eyes of his fellow-creatures, he re-entered the room. There

the first object which greeted his eyes did more to steel his heart and brace his nerves than all his contemplation of the solemn stars, or the fanning of the night breezes on his heated brow. The spectacle, that administered so potent a moral tonic, was the sight of Miss Neil circling round, animated and gay, with a young officer of their acquaintance, to the strains of a delicious waltz.

"The levity! the heartlessness of women," muttered Tunstall, between his set teeth. But if jealousy and anger had not blinded his eyes, he must have seen how the quick step flagged sometimes, and how the light only flashed at intervals into the face that used to be so bright with innocent gaiety. To prove to this flinty-hearted young lady that other people could be as indifferent, he marched off to find Miss Cubison, upon whom apparently he commenced to lavish great tenderness of manner, and upon whom, in reality, he was venting his jealous anger in a quarrel.

"Mary, who is that fellow who has been dancing with you?"

"I have been dancing with a good many 'fellows,' from Lord Merritt downwards," Miss Cubison answered demurely.

"Nonsense! Who is that stranger, confoundedly good-looking, and as tall as a church steeple?"

"Perhaps you mean my cousin," she said, stealing a timid glance up into his cloudy face.

"Oh! he is a cousin, is he? Then all I can say is, *family affection* is not wanting."

Miss Cubison's regard for her relatives apparently did not extend to a partiality for talking about them, for she made no reply to the remark

"How is it I never heard of this cousin before?" Tunstall resumed, after a pause.

"I only met him—that is to say, I was visiting at his house, my uncle's, the other day, when I was away," she said, shifting her light blue eyes from his stern countenance to the chalked floor.

"Well, you established a pretty good understanding with him," said Tunstall drily; adding savagely, "Everybody in the room has been passing remarks upon you."

To dispose of a grievance there is nothing like starting a counter-grievance must have been Miss Cubison's policy, for she now hazarded the suggestion, "Of course I must like your devotion to Miss Neil."

"Miss Neil! Nonsense! You know what my aunt is," said Tunstall—a remark which he would have found a difficulty in explaining.

"Do you wish to sit out the whole dance?" asked Miss Cubison the next moment, glad of peace at any price. "The music will cease directly."

"Aunt Tabitha, I have a piece of news for you," said Mildred suddenly, as they were driving home, and she startled that respect-

able elderly lady out of the nap she had been taking in the corner of the carriage.

"Yes, what is it?" asked Miss Tabitha, sitting very bolt upright, and pushing her cap rather more athwart than it had been previously in her effort to look wide awake.

"Well, you won't be offended, aunt; but you know I have been asked, and I am going to spend Christmas at Uncle Foster's," said the girl gently, but firmly.

"Indeed you won't!" was Miss Tabitha's sole comment, and muttering something about such unholy hours, she relapsed back into the carriage corner and somnolence.

And to that resolution Miss Tabitha held, with even more than her accustomed tenacity; so that Mildred was obliged to give way, and remain in Herbert Tunstall's presence. Far, though, from peril lurking in this circumstance, the distance at which Mildred so sedulously kept Tunstall, and the gentle unvarying coldness with which she treated him, only the more convinced him of the utter hopelessness of his position; and their residence under one roof finally effected a greater separation between the two than any extent of distance could have done.

It was as well that Miss Neil's scheme of departure from Staineley had been frustrated; for the village of Staineley was not capable of many sensations, and that Christmas-tide it was furnished with such a sensation as it had never been supplied with before: providing an agreeable scandal for the leisure of the holidays. The occurrence that electrified the whole parish was in very deed a startling event—nothing less than the elopement of Miss Mary Cubison with her cousin. The decorous daughter of their decorous parish priest! the thing was unparalleled. It turned out after that the match had been opposed by her father; and Mary, like many another timid nature, had done a more desperate deed than a bolder spirit might have attempted, and solved all her difficulties and entanglements by quietly going off with her lover and getting married secretly in London.

Probably no one knew more of the matter than Herbert Tunstall, to whom the bride wrote a characteristic letter of explanation, in which she begged his pardon for her deception, and apologized for breaking her engagement with him, much as though she had been excusing herself from a promise to practise archery for an afternoon, or share an hour's ride.

Mr. Tunstall carried the letter to Miss Neil, who, however, declined to read it. "You have heard the news?" said he inquiringly.

"Yes," Mildred answered gravely. "I think the method of taking her course a mistake; it gives occasion for talk."

"But," said Tunstall, "her father is such a Turk."

"Then he merits the scandal that this nine days' wonder will call forth."

No more passed at the time, but that evening Tunstall drew Mildred to him, and whisperingly asked her: "May I tell you the story now of how I love you with all my heart, and mind, and strength, with my whole being?"

And Mildred must have consented and given him a favourable reply; for after a while Herbert made the suggestion that they should go and set Miss Tabitha's heart at rest.

"Yes, and let us make confession of all our misdeeds, and how we deceived her," said Mildred, very penitent, and very much in earnest.

"I don't know about our intentions, but I doubt if we ever misled her very far," Tunstall declared with a laugh. "However, we'll find her and explain everything."

Miss Tabitha was discovered resting in the drawing-room, and her nephew led Mildred up to her at once.

"We have come to tell you that we allow that you knew a great deal better than ourselves what was good for us, and we are quite ready now to fulfil your wishes," said Tunstall promptly.

"That is not it at all," said Mildred, sinking on her knees beside the kind old lady, and leaning her head up against her shoulder. "We have come to confess that we very wickedly formed a plan of circumvention, and shamefully deceived you by a pretence of compliance."

"Ah!" said Miss Tabitha with a smile of superior wisdom. "You see, I thought you would cut your fingers when you began to play with edged tools. But all that's nothing: I always get my own way. Now," she added briskly, "do you want to know when you may be married?"

"Yes, yes," said Herbert Tunstall in a hurry.

"No, no, no," said Mildred in a greater.

"To-day is Wednesday: this day five weeks then," was the unhesitating reply of the autocrat.

So it was settled decisively: and Mildred's last charge upon the important morning was an injunction to Miss Tabitha to be careful her bonnet did not favour her right ear or her left, to bring discredit upon the wedding party. The marriage was duly consummated; and Miss Tabitha's bonnet inclined neither to the right nor to the left, for it is stated on credible authority that in her agitation she pushed it completely off her head, and throughout the ceremony it graced her back.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE STUDY.

SIR MARCUS COMBERMERE'S study was well known in the neighbourhood as the place where the best advice could be had in all kinds of trouble. Notwithstanding his having retired from his profession, he never had the heart to refuse an applicant for medical aid; and the reputation of his kindness, and sound judgment in other matters, brought him many appeals for help and counsel, which were never heard in vain.

To this council-chamber, when his other guests had been duly attended to, he conducted Adela Granard.

"Now, my dear young lady," he said, as he drew a chair for her nearer the fire, "your charge is quite happy with Kate and the dogs, and we have time to discuss her case. The letter of my old acquaintance tells me only a part—the rest I am to learn from you. How came the matter into your hands at all?"

Adela explained, and told her story. He listened with grave attention, taking a note or two, and now and then asking a question. When she paused, he sat thinking for a few minutes before he made any remark.

"From what I know of the gentleman, this Professor Dangerfield," he said, presently, "he has not acted in this way without a motive, and he is not likely to give up his point without a struggle. Have you heard from Ostend since you left?"

"No. I wrote to Miss Joseph from London, and I am expecting an answer, which would be addressed to my lodgings there."

"He must soon have become aware of what had been done. By this time he must be on your tr ail. You are prepared for that?"

"I am prepared for nothing: except to stand by Emily to the last," was Miss Granard's answer.

"Well, that is no bad preparation. Have you any suspicion that you are watched and followed?"

"No, not exactly. I only thought it rather odd about that lad: but I may be quite wrong."

"It is never wrong in such cases to take account of everything. I made a note about him while you were talking."

Sir Marcus rang the bell, and wrote a few lines on a slip of paper, which, on the entrance of Stephens, he handed to him to read. His experienced servant showed no surprise, read the paper, and retired with it in his hand.

"Now, my dear," continued Sir Marcus, as he stirred the fire, "your friend Paul Rocket will not do anything to-day that is not quietly observed, and if any suspicion attaches to him we shall know how to keep him from giving trouble. Has Kate spoken her mind to you about your own proceedings?"

"She was kind enough to press our staying here; but, indeed ——"

"Indeed, then, you will have to stay, for I am not going to assist you in disappointing my daughter. Seriously, you and the child are safer here than in any lodgings by yourselves. She will require careful watching, in more ways than one, and I do not hesitate to tell you that your guardianship will not be without danger."

"I am not afraid for myself, Sir Marcus. I am for her."

"So am I; and I am not going to let you out of my own keeping till we know how you stand. What strikes me as singular in the whole business is, not that the fellow should torment his wife and her child, if he thinks he can get anything by it, but that he should not by this time have got every penny into his own hands. As I recollect the case, for it was much talked of when they married, the whole of Stormount's fortune was secured to his wife, even in the event of a second marriage. Dangerfield could not touch it without her consent, but he could persuade or terrify her into making it over to him, or into leaving it to him at her death. He may do so still."

"He may; but Miss Joseph said it was the one point on which Mrs. Dangerfield could be firm. That she should be so amazes her: he has uncontrolled use of the income, leaving her often almost without money for necessaries, but nothing has ever induced her to touch the capital which is to be her child's portion."

"She will fight for her fortune, then, and yet allow them to tamper with her intellect! And, finding her obstinate, he has taken pains to divide mother and daughter, by making them wretched when they were together."

"Yes—I saw that, and I see its effect on Emily. She talks lovingly of her mother at a distance, but as if separation were a

matter of course: and I know if they were to meet suddenly in this room, the poor child's first thought would be that her stepfather was close behind."

"And what do you think of Emily's disposition?"

"As far as I have seen," said Adela, "I can only wonder how anyone could have the heart to make her unhappy. She is so grateful for kindness, so trusting and willing to obey, and so loving in her ways, it is impossible not to love her in return."

"Your account tallies with that of Dr. Thaddeus. He says that in her capacity for loving lies the secret of her restoration. You will give Emily the affection she is pining for, and we will all combine to guard her against the enemy. You have not written to Ostend this morning?"

"No. I wished to consult you first."

"Then wait a day or two. Your friends there have your London address, so they can let you know if anything happens. Now tell me about yourself: for the sight of you has taken me back so many years, I cannot help assuming the right of an older friendship than you will perhaps allow."

There was no resisting his kindness, and the conversation which followed, if it reopened the springs of grief, did much towards removing a dull, aching pain, of which, till thus removed, Adela was scarcely conscious. Her wounds were still so fresh—her old life was so newly buried—that there had been a positive hunger in her soul for sympathy: and yet she would have thought it obtrusive to seek it. Now that she had once begun to speak of the vanished home and the old familiar faces, they did not seem so utterly lost and gone. She could even talk with tolerable calmness of her own future, and of the change of plans involved by the care of Emily. Death had been so busy among her race, that two married brothers, one in India, the other in South America, were all she had left; and, with her very moderate income, she had intended joining some community devoted to sick nursing or orphan training. This must be given up if the guardianship were really to be hers; but nothing could be decided upon for the present. Except what Sir Marcus insisted upon—that she should give him a fair opportunity of studying the case by remaining at Comber Court.

He had learned more, both of her affairs and of her character, than she was aware of revealing, and after she left the room he remained in deep thought for some little time—gazing into the fire with a softened dreaminess in his eyes, such as they seldom wore unless he was alone. His reverie did not last long, for Kate came in to fetch a volume of prints, and seeing him look grave and thoughtful, lingered in hopes that he would speak. Rousing himself with an effort, he asked where Lewis Frankland was.

"Lewis and Dandie are burrowing in the snow, making an Esquimaux hut for Miss Wilmot: whose greatest delight seems to be

in setting other people about difficult jobs," added Kate, with the least little touch of spleen in her voice that did not escape her father.

"Lewis is still a boy at heart, for all his scholarly dignities. I conclude poor Archdale is taking no share in the construction of the cool grot?"

"No indeed. To tell you the truth, there seems coldness enough between those two to give them a grot ready-made. Archdale looked quite ill a little while ago, as he was writing in the billiard-room."

"I'll have a look at him presently. Two charming women worrying a poor fellow at once is enough to make anyone ill. Where is Mr. Bourne?"

"In an awful temper. He seems to think Miss Granard's arrival was done on purpose to affront him: and nothing will persuade him that he and his party are not in the way. If he says much more about it, I shall be tempted to offer him the use of Lewis's hut."

"I'll put him all right with a game at billiards. We must enlist him in Miss Granard's cause—she will want all the friends she can get. I shall surprise you, Kate, when I say that it is not at all unlikely that she and Lewis brought in one of Dangerfield's spies last night with them."

"Do you mean that good-looking boy? I cannot believe it. Lewis has taken quite a fancy to him."

"I know nothing against the lad, as yet: only it is singular that he should have followed them wherever they went. And it is plain, from Adela's story, that the stepfather has confederates to help him. A man who has done what he did will not be easily prevented from doing more. Dangerfield is to be dreaded. Make the child happy—she is a loving little thing, they say—and children are always happy with you, my Kate."

"I'll do my best, father; but I wish I had not heard that boy was a spy. I shall expect him to jump out upon me in some dark corner. Are you going to turn him off the premises?"

"Not till I have spoken to Lewis. Send him to me when his winter palace is finished. He will find me in the billiard-room."

As the door closed behind the father and daughter, a curious thing happened, which might have startled them not a little had they turned suddenly back. The thick, red window curtain was shaken by something stronger than the draught from the window, and along the pole from which it hung went, cautiously sliding, first one slender hand and then another, and Paul's lithe figure dropped lightly to the floor. His first action was to stretch his limbs, cramped by the attitude preserved so long, and the second to warm them at the fire. Only a tried performer like himself could have endured the strain and the cold together, and even he was glad to be released.

That his nerves were to the full as strong as his muscles, was evident from the composure with which he accepted his equivocal

situation. Though he touched nothing, his keen eyes noted everything; all the details of the apartment were safe in his memory before he moved to the door and looked cautiously out. Voices and billiard-balls in one direction, music in another, warned him of the risk he ran of being discovered where he certainly had no business to be, and what he had overheard made it expedient he should rouse no needless suspicion. The choice lay between a retreat into the garden, and by the offices; but before he had decided the point the door of the billiard-room was suddenly opened, and a gentleman came out with a letter in his hand.

"Anyone going to the post, do you know, who would take this for me? Why—halloa!"

Soldier as Ernest Archdale was, the surprise made the letter drop from his fingers. Paul alertly picked it up, and the address caught his eye. He saw his way in a moment.

"I'll post it if you wish, Mr. Archdale; but," dropping his voice, "I should say it wouldn't find him in Paris now."

"Is he here?" asked the young officer, in a hoarse whisper. Paul shook his head.

"You are come with a message, lad. Is it a threat—or what? Stay! This is no place to talk in. Come up to my bed-room. I was going to lie down for an hour, for I am in hospital still."

He began to ascend the stairs as he spoke, Paul following in silence, and secretly wondering how all this would end. Kate's care of the invalid had provided that a fire should burn in his room night and day, and every comfort had been sedulously placed within his reach by orders of his host. He sank into his arm-chair with a sigh of exhaustion; signed to Paul to lock the door, and pointed to a seat opposite his own.

"Now then, youngster, to business. Will you take anything?"

"No, thank you, sir; I never drink."

"You are quite right, if you still have to do the work I have seen put upon you."

"What you've seen me do, sir, was a mere song to what I've done since. And where a hair's breadth may cost you your life, or your backbone, it won't do not to keep your head cool and clear."

"It does not always save you, even then, as you may see by the mess I have made of it."

"I'm sorry to see you in such pain, sir," for Ernest was writhing, even while he tried to smile; "awfully sorry."

"Thank you, my lad; it was my own fault, and can't be helped now. Out with your budget of bad news. You come to help push me to the wall, don't you?"

"Not quite that, sir," said Paul, with a decided change of manner. "I'd rather see you clear it: as you did those fences, so long as you and Cairngorm had fair play. But he was not to win, nor you

either—it was a regular plant, and some were mixed up in it that ought to have been ashamed of themselves."

"I always knew it was foul play," said Archdale, wearily, "but I could not bring it to book. I was fool enough to trust men who called themselves my friends, and am let in to pay your master three hundred pounds, which I no more owe than you do. I suppose you know he has dropped me a demand for half of it, in a letter I only received this morning, threatening to use stronger measures if he did not hear at once in return. That means, of course, coming down upon my mother. Now, Paul, you are a good fellow, and I don't mind telling you that must not be. She must not know who sent you, or why you are come."

"Quite right, sir; always better not to bring the ladies into these things: and, as to your affair, I'm sure if the Professor knew how ill you were, he'd not have troubled you at all. Look here, sir; if you'd let me manage matters for you, I think I could make it all easy. You say you don't want it to be known that I have anything to do with him?"

"I do say it, and mean it. I'll make it worth your while, my lad, for it would fret my mother into a fever."

"Well, sir, if you'll just tell Sir Marcus that you know me, and can give me a recommendation as one that a gentleman can trust in his stable, it will make his mind easy. He has begun to suspect something; and if he presses me hard, more will come out than will suit either you or me."

"Do you want a place, then?"

"Yes, sir, I do. I'm not wanted now over the water, and I've seen just the master I should like to serve, indoors and out. Wages no object; if I have a master that trusts me, I'll be bound to take care of his pocket, and then he'll remember mine. I wish you'd take me on trial, Mr. Archdale."

"My good lad, I have no horses at present, and it is doubtful whether I shall ever be fit for service again."

"Don't give in, sir; you'll pull through. I've seen worse cases than yours. I'm not a bad nurse, sir; I've sat up, night after night, with sick horses, and saved one that was given over. I'll serve you faithfully, and you'll not be troubled about that money while I am with you—trust me for that."

"I begin to believe the boy is in earnest!" half laughed Archdale. "Why, youngster, I can hardly keep myself, much less a servant, otherwise I should ask nothing better, for I give no end of trouble. What put such a notion into your head?"

"Sitting here and looking at you, sir. Is it a bargain?"

"A very poor one for you, if it is."

"Not a bit of it, sir. See how different it will be for me when I go down and say, 'Mr. Archdale knows me well, and has taken me at once for his servant,' instead of having it ferreted out of me that

I came on Mr. Dangerfield's business, and all the rest of it. You'll be answerable for me here, and I'll undertake for you there; and if I don't see you turn the tables on them that planned how to get you out of the way, and have the laugh against them in return, whether lady or gentleman, or both, I'll take to blue spectacles, for my eyes won't be of any more use."

The young officer's pale cheek glowed with a passing flush, and he bit his lip sharply. Half raising himself in his chair, he tore his letter in half, and flung it into the fire. Paul saw his cause was won: and the next half-hour was spent by them in private consultation.

Ernest Archdale was not a man to make difficulties greater by thinking about them. Having once decided, he made short work of his explanations. He took an early opportunity of speaking to his friendly host and apologising for what might seem a liberty: he had met with an old acquaintance in the lad Paul Rocket, and had engaged him on trial.

"You know I cannot afford an expensive attendant," he said, with a smile; "but I have often longed to have some one near me at night whom I might call without disturbing my mother. I know this young fellow, and that he is sharp and handy—to say nothing of his being such a horsebreaker as you do not often see."

"I am glad you feel that to be still a recommendation."

"Well, it is rather a sinecure post at present, but I may get patched up after all: and meanwhile the boy comes on low wages and will be useful in a dozen ways."

"I am pleased to hear it, for I had begun to wonder whether all was good about that boy, and meant to keep an eye upon him till I knew more. You will like a shake-down made up for him in your own room, won't you?"

"Only I did not mean to quarter him upon you. He might go to the inn while we are here."

"Might he, indeed! What, in this weather? I suppose my friend's servant may claim as much shelter as my enemy's dog. Kate will see about it all. Have you mentioned it to your mother?"

"No, I am going to tell her now."

"She'll be the least in the world astonished, don't you think?"

"In these matters I usually judge for myself," said Ernest, with an indifference in his tone which he was far from feeling. He made his way into the well-warmed drawing-room, where the ladies were assembled, and was immediately greeted with enquiries as to what he had been doing with himself, when they were waiting for him to come and read aloud.

"I am sorry to have failed in any service that was your due," said he, as he took his seat, "but I had some important household matters to arrange: and ladies always admit that as an excuse. Do you not, Miss Combermere?"

"No indeed," said Kate. "In any important matters I should expect to be consulted."

"Even with regard to the stables?"

"That may be an exception, certainly."

"So I thought. Well, my arrangement concerns my future stables, when I have them; and meanwhile, Paul Rocket will be groom of the chambers, if of nothing else."

General curiosity being excited, Ernest went on, without noticing his mother's heightened colour, to explain that he had known the lad in Ireland, where his riding was much admired.

"If some of my friends there knew that I had engaged him they would never rest till they got him away."

"I understood," observed Miss Granard, "that he had belonged to a circus."

"He has tried that among other things, he tells me: but he has had enough of knocking about to be glad to take service with an invalid—the dullest and most trying service of all."

Miss Medlicott sighed and shook her head; Cecilia turned to look at the speaker, as if doubtful what he meant.

"Did I ever see him, do you suppose, Mr. Archdale?"

"That I cannot say; but he has seen you, Miss Wilmot—when you were (I think) in Major Palmer's phaeton."

What this meant no one knew but themselves: but Cecilia's cheeks became crimson, and her eyes filled with tears. Mrs. Archdale hastily interposed.

"Any one would suppose you were in earnest, my boy. You cannot really mean ——"

"Indeed, I do, my dear mother: and if you do not find him a treasure, never trust my judgment again."

"But, dear Mr. Archdale," began Mrs. Bourne, "you don't mean to tell us that you have actually engaged a boy out of a circus—dancing on ropes, and jumping through hoops, and the clown and tumblers, and all that sort of thing. And you such an invalid, too! You never can ——"

"I have not taken the circus with him, Mrs. Bourne."

"But you say he belonged to one," cried Mrs. Archdale.

"From a whim, I believe; or the real love of showing his agility. With the dead weight of my shattered bones to look after, he will have quite enough of the drag on to keep him from the high ropes. Now I am at your service for anything you may propose."

His mother took the hint, and concealed her surprise and annoyance till they should be alone; but Mrs. Bourne could not get over it. She held her tongue while the reading went on, but when they were all summoned to luncheon could not help taking her husband apart to ask if nothing could be done—if no one would speak to the dear young man and prevent his being waited upon by a merry-andrew. "It was not safe for any of them; they might all be burnt

in their beds—and if Miss Medlicott were once to be frightened in her first sleep, she might never get a good night's rest again."

"What affair is that of mine, my dear?"

"Oh, my love, poor Miss Medlicott! and she such a sufferer. If she doesn't sleep at night how is she to get through the day? And, for all our sakes, it is not safe—those people are always jumping about, you don't know where. He'll be walking on the ceiling, or something, like that dreadful man in Paris who drank wine upside down. I must ask Sir Marcus if it is safe to have him in the house."

"You had better not talk quite so loud: the young fellow is just behind you," whispered Mr. Bourne.

There, in fact, stood Paul, with a dish in his hand, evidently on the accepted footing of a respectable servant, and looking as demure and quiet as if he had never been anything else.

Mrs. Bourne's first start of terror passed away as she saw him look so much like other people. But she could not help having misgivings that this was all put on, and watched him as he stood behind Ernest's chair, with the vague expectation of seeing him do something presently, "as those people always did when you were not thinking."

The spirit of mischief being stronger than prudence, the respectable servant took the first opportunity of making her a grimace, so singularly threatening that she was struck dumb; she dared not venture even to complain. She only begged her husband after luncheon to see about leaving, as she was sure they were too many for dear good Kate, and Miss Medlicott was kind enough to say she would go home with them for a little while.

Whether, even with this inducement, Mr. Bourne would have agreed to the proposal, cannot be determined, for the state of the weather that afternoon became such that no one could travel.

The next day the railway was quite impassable, and the mail bags had to be carried for some distance by hardy messengers tramping through the snow. A dense fog came on, such as had not been known in those parts for twenty years, and the weather-wise were serious in their predictions of a long and severe frost. Kate's skill in housekeeping was somewhat tried in providing for her numerous guests; but she did not forget the claimants outside, whom the hard season made more than usually dependent on her kitchen and larder; and Mr. Bourne and Mrs. Archdale had their first real quarrel on the subject. In his opinion, at least the opinion he chose to express, ladies did much more harm than good whenever they meddled with the poor; for one person truly relieved by their gifts they made half-a-dozen greedy, idle, and discontented.

"It is happy for those who never give to anybody, and have nothing to reproach themselves with," sneered Mrs. Archdale. She had had several little things to try her temper, and felt that she must retort, or die.

"If you mean me, Mrs. Archdale," cried he, "it is very true that

I do not encourage begging; and if you wish for a quiet life, I advise you never to let anybody think you have sixpence to give away. All classes are alike—what holds good with Kate Combermere's old women is quite as true of your fashionable folks. Let that poor child there," nodding at Emily, who was deep in a book at the further end of the room, "live to come into her mother's money, and see if a swarm won't come round her—some of them the most charming people in the world."

"I have known some people the very reverse of charming, who think more of a good income than of any other attraction."

"Very likely, ma'am; for one advantage of having enough money of your own is that it saves you from scheming about other people's."

"If it does—but that is the question. The greediness of the poor, of which you speak so kindly, is nothing, in my opinion, to the selfishness of the rich. Those who have most are the very people who seem to crave more."

"What a comfort it must be, then, to you, ma'am, not to have the temptation, and to have a son able and willing to gratify all your fancies as well as his own!" fired Mr. Bourne, in his increasing irritability.

"I was sure my poor boy's whim would not pass without some kind remark," she retorted. "Yet if I do not object to his doing a kindness to a friendless lad, I do not know who should."

"Certainly; so long as the friendless lad behaves himself: he strikes me as the most impudent young vagabond I ever saw, and I for one shall not put up with any nonsense. I do not bring a parcel of servants myself into other people's houses to annoy their friends, and I do not expect to be annoyed."

"Dear me, no; why should you be? I quite agree with you about not troubling one's friends, and therefore I make a point of not arriving with twice the number of people that was expected."

"Madam, if I had known I should have the honour of meeting *you* here, I might have thought twice before I made arrangements to come. As it is, I only wait for the weather, to release my friend Combermere from the inconvenience I have put him to."

"I hope the change will do you all good, my dear sir, especially Miss Medlicott. I understand she is to stay with you for some months, till her health is re-established. How very kind of you to ask her! If you were a charitable lady now, Mr. Bourne, I might quote your own opinion against you; but as you are only a gentleman, and not charitable at all—what was that?"

It was a cry from Emily, who was standing erect, in an attitude of terrified but keen attention.

"He is calling me! I know he is! Adela! Adela!"

And before either of the dismayed disputants could ask a question, she had darted from the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW HESTER SAW HER CHILD.

THE conservatory at Comber Court was entered from the hall by two rather steep steps. Down these steps rushed poor Emily, without a thought of caution, and missing her footing, fell over a flower-pot, bruising and slightly grazing her forehead in the fall. When Adela, startled by her cry, flew to the scene, she could not at first imagine where she had hidden herself. Mrs. Archdale and Mr. Bourne (whose dispute had happily been ended by the shock) could only tell her that the poor child had taken fright quite suddenly; and that when they followed her to the door she had disappeared. They would have joined in the search but for Adela's earnest request that nothing might be done to increase the dangerous excitement; and when she at last thought of the conservatory, she found Emily sitting on the mat, supported by Paul Rocket, who was holding a wet handkerchief to her forehead.

He looked up almost angrily as Miss Granard appeared. "She has been frightened, poor little lady! She is all of a tremble still, and she has knocked her head with the flower-pot, but I don't think it will be much. Who was it?—do you know?"

"I cannot tell," said Adela, as she took Emily in her arms. "What was the matter, love? I heard nothing but your scream to me."

"Did I scream?" gasped Emily. "I am very sorry. I thought the Professor was calling me. I did, indeed."

"You must try and conquer these fancies, my dear child; you have quite frightened poor Paul; he is nearly as pale as you are, though he was holding you so carefully and kindly. You know Mr. Archdale said he was a capital nurse."

"Yes, and I am glad he is to live with Mr. Archdale, because he is kind, too," breathed Emily, recovering herself. "Everybody is kind here, and I was very wrong to scream and frighten you all. Were you *very* much frightened, Paul?"

"Well, Miss Emily, I think you'd have been rather shook if I had tumbled into your greenhouse, just when you were in the middle of a job. And I don't see now what there was to make you do it."

She looked up in his face with that strange simplicity that was her chief characteristic.

"Because you do not know anything about spirits, I suppose, and all they can do, when *he* bids them."

"Spirits! Do you mean to say you have ever been frightened by *them?*"

"Yes, very much. But they will not hurt me here, while Miss Granard is with me."

"I did not know they ever had hurt you," muttered the boy, as he turned to pick up the fragments of the flower-pot. Adela took the opportunity of coaxing her charge to come away; she had no wish to hear her enter into further explanations. Before she left the conservatory, however, Emily held out her hand to Paul, repeating what she had said before, "I am glad you are here, because you are so kind," and he gave her fingers so hearty a squeeze, that it is to be feared he had something still to learn with regard to deportment in service.

Perhaps something of this was in Adela's thoughts, for she took an opportunity, later in the day, of mentioning the incident to Ernest Archdale, expressing a hope that the child's condition might prevent her words and actions from being misconstrued. He begged her to have no uneasiness on that score, and showed so much good-natured sympathy and goodwill, that she could not help feeling Emily had made a friend, and thanking him accordingly; and her thanks were so pleasant to him, that he sat down with her by the fire, and they had a long and interesting conversation.

It was only natural that she should be grateful for kindness to her charge, and no less so that a generous young man should feel a compassionate interest for a persecuted child; so we need not enquire too strictly how soon the interest in question began to assume a warmer and more vivid hue—at what precise moment he began to think how lovely Adela Granard looked in the dancing firelight, which, in the darkening afternoon, was soon all they had; how sweet were the tones of her voice—how touching was the suppressed sadness that was only too well justified by the deep mourning of her dress. In the irritated state of his feelings, sore with the sense of ill-usage, and weary of the blank which an uprooted passion leaves, Ernest was without defence against the charm, personal and mental, which was Adela's best heritage, a charm all the more winning from the absence of self-consciousness. Her mind was full of two absorbing topics—the home she had lost, and the work she had undertaken; and when she was induced to speak of either, it was with no latent thought of herself. Her heart was still "like the snow on Rona's crest:" it had never been touched by other affection than that of her family and friends; and though quite aware of the admiration she excited, it had seemed as much a matter of course, as did the deference she derived from her father's official position. The one was no more made a subject of vanity than was the other of pride.

Of illness and suffering she had seen enough to make her feel for the young man, who bore his share of both so uncomplainingly; if she had no sentimental preference for pale cheeks and broken health, she appreciated all the more the unselfish patience and consideration for others, which, though the special graces of the sick-room, are not always found with invalids. And, unawares, this may have added something to the natural sweetness of her manner—most probably

did so; for Ernest forgot everything else in the new pleasure her society gave him.

The entrance of Stephens was an unwelcome interruption. He brought Miss Granard a letter.

"Your servant, ma'am, has just come over with it."

"Charles has? Where is he?"

"In the servants' hall, ma'am. Shall I send him here?"

"In ten minutes I shall be ready to see him. Thanks," as the butler lighted candles on the mantel-piece—"if Mr. Archdale will excuse me?"

Ernest bowed, and took up a newspaper which he only pretended to read; from behind whose shelter he could look at her unobserved. It grieved him, however, to see the harassed, anxious expression that gathered upon her face as she read, especially as the envelope she had laid on the table bore the Belgian post mark and stamp.

The enquiry he longed to make was, however, made for him by Kate Combermere, who came in search of her guest, and was as much struck as he was by the anxious look in her face.

Between these two warm and kindly natures a strong liking had sprung up at first sight, which was hourly ripening to full strength; and Kate did not hesitate to ask if she had had bad news.

"My poor friend writes in an agitation that is only too natural," said Adela, sadly, "but one part of her letter puzzles me very much. Will you read it, and tell me what you think?"

Kate's eye glanced rapidly down the page. The handwriting was tremulous enough at the beginning, but was scarcely legible towards the end.

"DEAREST ADELA,—The relief your letter brought me was immense—I felt, when it was too late, that I might have given you both an illness. Still, I was right in what I did. He came home the next day, and, of course, knew everything without my telling him, but did not mention the subject till the evening. To all I could say about the opinion of Dr. Thaddeus, that Emily must have change, he only replied, with one of his curious smiles, that if I had sent her to the South of France, instead of the fogs of London, he might have believed me. However, he added, she was not so far off but that she could be fetched home, if I grew worse. You have no idea how those words haunt me. I find myself feeling my pulse and examining my withered face in the glass a dozen times a day. If strength of will can prevent my dying, I shall live some time yet; I will not give way, and so furnish an excuse for bringing her back: and whatever you hear, good, kind Adela, don't think it your duty or hers to come here. If my words have any weight—and they ought to have—*keep her out of his hands*, let him write or say what he will. I enclose a cheque for her expenses. Please acknowledge through Miss Joseph, as before.

"I was interrupted, and now have something more to tell you. He

had a séance this afternoon. When all the people were gone, he sent for me, intimating there was a pleasure in store that I did not expect. To please him I went—pleasure for myself I gave up long ago—and how it was done, I cannot say, but I was shown my Emily, dressed as she had often been here, in a room I had never seen—with heavy looking red curtains, a portrait on the walls, hanging over an Indian cabinet; a table with a curious silver inkstand (I think), and a carved elbow chair. The snow, I noticed, lay thickly against the window panes. It was all so real that I could not help screaming, and directly I did so it was all gone. How I came back to my room I hardly know, but he must have helped me, for I heard his voice hissing in my ear, 'If I can see her where she is now, do you not think I can reach her too?' It is very late, but I am writing to catch the early mail—is there such a room where you are now? Send me word through Miss Joseph. He will carry his point after all. I am feeling very ill. Don't come.—Your affectionate

"HESTER DANGERFIELD."

Kate read, and looked at her friend. "The room," she said, "is my father's study."

Ernest laid down the newspaper, and was about to leave them, but Miss Combermere stopped him.

"You can perhaps throw a light on the mystery. May I read that passage aloud, Miss Granard?"

Adela assented, and Ernest gladly stayed to listen. The name at the conclusion made him start.

"I thought the child's name was Stormount," he exclaimed.

"It was, till her mother married again. Did you not know that Emily had a stepfather?"

"And—and his name is Dangerfield? Not the Professor, I hope!"

Kate glanced at Adela again; and then at the speaker, who had risen in evident excitement.

"Mr. Dangerfield is known as the Professor. As to what he professes, that is another matter. Do you know anything of him?—or of what this intimate acquaintance with my father's room can mean?"

"I cannot deny knowing more of Mr. Dangerfield than I wish to know. Of the mystery in that letter I may learn something, if you will both do me the favour to say nothing about it at present."

To this the young ladies made no objection, and he left the apartment immediately.

"My father was quite right," said Kate. "You may depend upon it that page is a spy."

"But Mr. Archdale knows him, and seems to trust him: and there is something prepossessing in the boy himself. I only hope Mr. Archdale has not put himself into that man, Dangerfield's, power."

"I hope so too: but we must keep this from his mother, or she

would drive him distracted. He has quite enough to bear, poor fellow, without our bringing more upon him."

"He looks as if he had suffered," mused Adela, as if, in thinking of Ernest, she had almost forgotten Hester. Kate did not fail to mark the softened tone of interest: and, being sure it was good for her new friend to be sometimes taken out of her own troubles and Emily's, she went on to talk of his accident in the unfortunate steeplechase, which he had been induced to ride in against the known wishes of his mother.

"It is no secret, so I mention it; but what everybody does not know, is the reason he yielded," added Kate. "He has never mentioned it, and never will, being a gentleman; but I know, notwithstanding, that a young lady whom he passionately admired, and who seems to have had many admirers besides, induced him to it, saying she would give anything to see him ride the horse which nobody else could manage. He rode the horse, and splendidly—might have won the race, they say, but for a trap that had been cleverly laid for them both, and which brought them heavily to the ground. And the brother officer who laid the most bets against him was seen driving the young lady on that day, as well as during the remainder of the week."

"Do you know her name?" asked Miss Granard, with interest.

"Well, it would hardly be fair to give it: she may be sorry now. Between ourselves, I am rather afraid Mr. Archdale may have got into difficulties; my information adds that Cosmo Dangerfield was mixed up with the racing business, and was thought to have come out badly. I have only known all this just lately."

"From whom did you hear it?"

"From one who, having seen you once, wishes to see you again, and dines here to-day on purpose, weather being to him a matter of indifference, while agreeable company is not. Have I raised your curiosity?"

"A little. I only hope you have not raised his."

"And do you really expect to escape curiosity, in such a position as yours—a young, and, pardon me for adding, a very attractive woman, undertaking so singular a charge? I have kept your counsel as closely as I could, but the story will get talked of, and people will want to see you. And that reminds me that your servant, Charles, is still waiting, and that he turns out to be own brother to a worthy friend of mine, who lets the most comfortable lodgings in the neighbourhood. Was it to her you were going?"

"Yes: if the snow and Mr. Frankland had not decided otherwise. And now that Charles has, I expect, brought my boxes from London, it is time we thought of moving to his sister's rooms, and encroached on your goodness no longer."

"Then if that is all the good of his coming, I shall wish Charles had stayed away; and so I shall tell him."

Before so extreme a measure, however, could be carried out, Charles had been welcomed to his heart's content; for Sir Marcus recognised in him an old acquaintance, and carried him off to his study for a private conference.

"It is a good many years since I saw you last, Charles, and we are neither of us younger, but I never forget a face, whether you remember me or not."

Charles replied, with a low bow, that he had good reason for remembering Sir Marcus—though he was Dr. Combermere at that time.

"Very true; we are changed in many ways, but in essentials remain the same. I'll show you something that will stir your memory."

Opening the Indian cabinet already alluded to, he took out a miniature, and showed it to the man, whose eyes glistened with emotion.

"Sure, I ought to know that face well, Sir Marcus. It altered sadly at the last."

"Her daughter resembles both her parents—but her voice is her mother's. I can well believe her heart is also."

"A sweeter young lady, than Miss Adela, never walked, Sir Marcus."

"All the more reason she should walk in safety. That was a strange visit you paid at Ostend."

"My mistress has told you all about it, Sir Marcus?"

"She has; and that you are most deservedly in her confidence, so I can speak plainly. Has anyone annoyed you in London?"

"No one, sir. I have only seen Miss Granard's own friends, the gentlemen who are arranging her affairs. I must own they both dislike the idea of what she has undertaken, but I don't see that she could draw back now."

"Quite out of the question; what we have to do is to keep watch over them both. Did you know that that lad came down in the same train with them?"

"I caught sight of him just as the train went off, sir, and putting this and that together, it struck me as being odd. If I may be so bold, it was a relief to hear the ladies were safe under your roof, Sir Marcus. I couldn't be with them myself, having Miss Granard's boxes to see to, that were coming by the Rhine."

"Yes, I hope the young ladies are pretty safe here: and you must help to make them so, Charles, while we can persuade them to stay. What do you think of that young Rocket?"

"I know no harm of him," answered the man. "He has led a queer sort of life, I hear, horse-breaking, and circus-riding, and so forth; but I should say he had the making of a good servant in him with a master who would take a little trouble."

"He has found a master here, so I hope he will turn out well.

Anyhow, my butler has an eye upon him; and as you will be in and out, I would recommend you to have the same."

Charles bowed an emphatic assent.

"You will stay this evening, if Miss Granard does not object: and I daresay you will lend a hand at the sideboard, Charles, for we are rather a large party, and my footman is not very well. Our Londoners cannot always stand these sharp winters."

"The weather is mending a little, sir; it is beginning to thaw already."

"The most trying time of all. Don't forget my hint, Charles: just see what you can make of that circus youngster over cup and platter. He will be less on his guard with you."

It was only just before the gong sounded for dinner, and everybody else was in the drawing-room, when Miss Granard made her appearance. Emily had a headache, and she did not leave her till the last moment; though they both hoped she would be able to come down to tea. As Adela approached the group round the fire, Sir Marcus stepped forward to introduce his friend, Archdeacon Burleigh: in whom she at once recognised the fellow-traveller of her adventurous journey, and the subject of Kate's mysterious communication.

If the Archdeacon really had been desirous to make her acquaintance, he testified no eagerness by his manner; while not uncourteous, it was somewhat abrupt, and calculated to abash a timid stranger. His voice was exceedingly powerful, though long practice in speaking and preaching had brought it so completely under control, that its rich bass could thunder in wrath, or whisper in tenderness; just as his tall, athletic frame, indifferent, as Kate said, to wind and weather, could accommodate its strength to a game with a child, or a stroll with a feeble invalid.

There was in his eye a restless fire, which showed what guard he kept over a temper that might have made himself and others wretched—to which the domestic surliness of worthy Mr. Bourne would have been mildness in comparison. His complexion was healthy from exercise; his brows were thick and grey; the lower part of his face was square and massive, the lips closing with a firmness that only occasionally revealed his fine teeth, untouched by the hand of time, which had swept over head and cheek. By his own account, all diet was the same to him; and he had tried sufficient variety to be a fair judge, having travelled far and wide. For the rest, he was respected, hated, feared, loved—according to the different natures with which he came in contact. Kate, who was his godchild, was fond of him; Adela was not quite sure, at first, what her own feeling would be. They had not been many seconds at table, where she was seated between him and Ernest, when he turned to her to ask in an undertone after the health of her young companion. On hearing of a slight headache, he gave a snort of dissatisfaction.

"Don't coddle her. She wants bracing; as anyone can see."

"She wants a great deal," said Miss Granard: "but she cannot have it all at once."

The thick eyebrows were knitted together, and he looked down upon the speaker as if amazed at her audacity.

"You will have to be careful how you deal with her."

"I am quite aware of that; I hope to be so."

"Spirits are not to be kept out by lock and key, remember; and I hear they have followed her already. Yes, you are quite right in looking at Mr. Bourne; it was he who mentioned it. Do you hope to keep these things from being gossiped about? You are sanguine if you do."

"I am used to gossip, and if it only comes to my own hearing, I do not mind; but I want to keep it from the poor child herself."

"You are to be her guardian?"

"Her mother has asked me to be such."

"Why, you want a guardian to take care of *you*. A diamond is none the safer for being locked in a casket of gold."

"I have no choice in the matter, Mr. Archdeacon. I must learn now to protect myself; and I shall hope to do it for another."

"Lord of yourself, that heritage of woe—if you are lady of your own spirit, you may manage your own affairs. That child is to come in for a miserable income!"

"A much larger one than she will require, I believe."

"You believe that? Did you ever read of the family that were flitting to escape a domestic demon, and heard him talking in the middle of the luggage? Take care that you do not introduce a blacker spirit into your household than any your ward has encountered yet. That money of Mrs. Dangerfield's brings no blessing with it, and never can bring it."

He turned from her as if to avoid reply, and plunged into conversation with Miss Combermere.

Ernest's voice, a marked contrast to that of the Archdeacon, roused Adela from the reverie caused by those last words.

"I was beginning to feel, with Henry Tilney, that no gentleman has a right to distract the attention of his partner—especially when he has something particular to tell her."

"You have told me something already," answered Adela: "that you have duly studied your Miss Austen."

"Yes, that is a thing to boast of in these days, but I believe I have my lameness to thank for it. Miss Granard," sinking his voice so as only to be heard by herself, "I have been very venturesome since I saw you—I have almost made a promise in your name."

She made a slight gesture of surprise, but waited for an explanation.

"I have gained you an ally, who will, I think, prove of real value—and it is on the promise of an amnesty for the past."

"But who has offended me sufficiently to require such?"

"One who has injured Emily Stormount without intending to do so, or being aware of the fact until to-day. He has been watching us both ever since we sat down; anxious to see if I can persuade you or not."

"It is then as we suspected—he is a spy?"

"Not exactly. He has owned the truth; that he crossed in the steamer to watch you, and came down for the same purpose; but it was because he believed what his employer told him, that Emily's happiness depended on her not being taken out of his hands. Perhaps you are surprised at my believing him so readily; but if you had heard him yourself, and seen the tears in his eyes when he spoke of her clinging to him in her agony, poor child, you would think as I do, that he never meant to do her harm."

"He was employed, then, in some of those performances that Emily saw at Ostend?"

"Yes—and this is what he entreats she may never know. It has been a new and terrible idea to him that she is persecuted; and it rests with yourself whether you bind him to her service or not."

Adela glanced across the room, and saw Paul's eyes fixed on her, as it seemed, beseechingly. She returned the look with one of kindness, and he was immediately by her side, offering her he hardly knew what, that he might whisper a hurried "Thank you, ma'am"—which Ernest overheard.

"I would echo those thanks," he observed, "if I might be enrolled in that service too."

CHAPTER IX.

PAUL'S ADVICE.

"HAVE you any idea what Archdale and Miss Granard have found to talk about, that they look so seriously interested?" questioned Mr. Frankland of Cecilia Wilmot on the opposite side of the dinner-table. "I have been watching them with almost a lady's curiosity, and cannot make out the riddle."

"Then now I know why I have spoken to you three times without your vouchsafing me an answer. A lady's curiosity, indeed! Any woman could tell you that secret."

"Tell it, then, and I will own your superiority."

"It is simple enough," she laughed. "Miss Granard is discoursing on her own excellences, and Mr. Archdale on his bad nights. Good people and invalids never talk of anything but them-

selves. Try Miss Medlicott on your left, as she professes to be both."

"Having no weaknesses yourself, you are severe on those of others, Miss Wilmot."

"No weaknesses? I am made up of them, and one is a decided weakness for not being disappointed. You promised to show me an Esquimaux hut, and you have not yet done so."

"I hoped to show you that in some other form, but the snow was not deep enough, and I should have had to borrow Miss Granard's drift on the line," was Lewis Frankland's reply.

"Oh, nobody wanted you to do more than you had done *there* —unless, indeed, you could put her back again."

"Archdale wouldn't thank me for that, to judge by his looks. Ten thousand pardons! was that my clumsiness?" as Cecilia's wine-glass fell to the ground, staining her pretty evening dress.

"It was my own doing, I assure you," she said, with a smile which he thought very amiable. "The dress! oh, as to the damage done to that, I shall be delighted never to wear it again. It is one of those good things that sometimes last too long."

"I very much doubt your accommodating yourself to an Esquimaux hut, if you are so reckless of your wardrobe. Do you carry relays of these charming equipments, and when you are tired of them, do them a mischief?"

"She has done that in more ways than one, Frankland," interposed Mr. Bourne, who had been listening to the dialogue. "And she'll do it once too often: as I have told her before."

"When it comes to that," said Cecilia, whose eye had flashed a moment, while her lips were smiling, "I must do as wiser people have done, and telegraph for Noah's Arks and ninepins."

She smiled again at Lewis, and he thought her prettier than ever. Still, what Mr. Bourne had said left an unpleasing impression. He recollected his other neighbour, and turned to pay her a few civilities, somewhat amused to find Miss Wilmot's prophecy fulfilled. Miss Medlicott could only talk of herself, directly or indirectly.

"Thank you, Mr. Frankland, I do not feel the fire; I am ordered always to breathe air at a certain temperature in winter. I have great difficulty in making servants understand that, when I am in friends' houses. But Sir Marcus knows it is essential, and so——"

"I am in hopes the weather is on the turn, and you will be able to get out again. You have borne captivity bravely—much better than I could. How should you like the life to which I must return soon—driving Latin and Greek into boys' heads that are as hard as their own cricket balls?"

"I should be thankful if I were permitted to be of so much use. If my health allowed, nothing would delight me so much as to teach. I am quite surprised when I hear others complain of the trouble."

It was one of Miss Medlicott's illusions, and a very comfortable

one for her conscience, that there was nothing she would not have done had her health only allowed it; and in her private opinion, all the excellent actions performed by other people were of small value compared with those she was not able to do. The merit was as much hers as if she had done them, and she had a right to compassion and sympathy for being obliged to leave them alone. She did not maintain, with Mr. Bourne, that charity was generally a mistake; quite the contrary. She held that, to be charitable and industrious and useful were great privileges, for which those who had them ought to be full of thankfulness. To complain of trouble was perfectly wrong—let those complain who were obliged to stay by the fire, or in the cool shades, when they would give anything to be in the snow or the scorching sun in the path of duty.

Mrs. Bourne believed in her. She as firmly believed in her friend's goodness as in her bad health, and thought the earth, as she had already told the Archdeacon, had rarely seen her equal.

Now the Archdeacon's eyes and ears had the faculty of seeing and hearing nearly everything that went on around him; if he did not catch every word that passed between Ernest and Adela, he knew when the voices dropped as well as that Cecilia's wine-glass had; and he lost neither Mr. Bourne's sarcasm nor the sentences of Miss Medlicott. At this point his deep voice suddenly broke in.

"Everybody is ready to teach—that is nothing. The question is, why does nobody learn?"

"They are all much too clever," answered Mr. Bourne. "They know everything before it is told them—my ladies do."

"Oh, my dear, you don't mean poor stupid me," cried his wife. "As to learning, it was not thought so much of when I was young, Mr. Archdeacon. My friend Miss Medlicott now could have learned whatever you pleased, if only her health—and there is dear Cecilia too, with the most astonishing memory! *I* never could remember anything that wasn't perfectly simple."

"My dear lady," said he, leaning forward to address her more emphatically, "your modesty will not serve your turn. Did you ever find you had a doubtful half-crown in your purse? They were common enough at one time."

Mrs. Bourne stared. "Now you mention it, I did once; and though I rang it on the counter three times to convince the man, who I am sure gave it me, he wouldn't take it back."

"Then you had your lesson, Mrs. Bourne: it should have taught you, for life, not to mistake the ring of bad metal for that of good," nodded the divine.

"Rather severe," remarked Mrs. Archdale to her host, who only smiled in reply; but Mr. Bourne had caught the words, and resented them immediately.

"Severe, Mrs. Archdale?—how do you mean? I assure you it is no easy matter to tell the real from the imitation. Luckily I have

a keen sense of sham, and am not to be taken in; but it is not the case with everybody, and the Archdeacon is quite right."

Kate glanced at her father and then at Lewis. They both saw the appeal: and the conversation being driven into a less perilous channel, did not again lead to personalities.

"I hope I shall see my little fellow-traveller," said the Archdeacon, as the ladies rose.

"You must not stay long over your wine, then, for her doctor will not let her sit up late," was Miss Combermere's reply. She knew that her father would be too glad to escape, to say nothing of the two young men.

They found Emily in the drawing-room, amusing herself with the little dog, Dandie, and looking much refreshed by some quiet sleep. Perhaps the attention and interest bestowed on her by two of the ladies may have had some hidden motive beyond that of natural kind-heartedness. Mrs. Archdale and Miss Wilmot, as if by mutual consent, made her the centre of all their sympathy, ignoring Miss Medlicott so completely that it is not surprising the latter should become exceedingly faint, and require the help of Mrs. Bourne and Kate to retire to her own room for awhile—perhaps, she said, till tea-time.

Nobody but Mrs. Bourne regretted her absence, and Kate was most sincere in offering to send her up any relays of refreshment her condition might require, sooner than she should exert herself to come down again. Meanwhile, there was a general combination to divert Emily, and with Dandie's help it was successful. Dandie was of Miss Medlicott's opinion, that it was pleasantest to be the principal object of attention; and Coco being upstairs, he was willing to show off all his tricks and earn as much bread-and-butter as he could get. The child's laugh of delight at the performance fell musically on the ear of the Archdeacon, as he entered a little in advance of the other gentlemen.

"I knew I was coming among dog lovers," he said to her, with a bright smile that softened the sterner lines of his countenance. "There is nothing that makes one feel bolder and braver than to see how these poor things trust to our care of them. They put us to shame often enough. We do not trust our guardians as they do us."

"Have you got a guardian?" asked Emily, looking up.

"Aye, my little woman, I hope so. And when you come to see me, we will have a talk about it. I am glad to see you were none the worse for the snow."

"I am very glad about the snow, because it caused us to come here, and Paul has got a nice place."

The Archdeacon looked round for information. He was told Paul's history, as far as Adela felt at liberty to tell it.

"I must own my son startled me at first," said Mrs. Archdale, "but he has found the youth a great comfort, so I can say nothing.

I have had no chance," glancing at the Archdeacon, "of ringing the half-crown on the counter yet."

"Paul is very kind; he is very good to Coco," pleaded Emily, who thought something was implied to the disparagement of her friend.

"By the way, where is Coco?" asked the Archdeacon. "I have a bit of cake in my pocket for him."

Coco, she explained, was asleep in his basket upstairs, but she would fetch him if he liked. On this being declined, she begged leave to carry up the bit of cake—it would be such a surprise!

"Do, dear," said Cecilia. "I am going up to see what can be done to my dress, so we will go together."

"You will just look in at poor Miss Medlicott for one minute, will you not?" said Mrs. Bourne plaintively. "She may like to come down on your arm if she knows the tea is in."

As this was probable, Miss Wilmot made no visible objection beyond a demure glance at Kate, and the two departed together, Adela remarking with satisfaction that her charge had forgotten her fears.

"Depend upon it," said the Archdeacon, "your adviser, Dr. Thaddeus, was right as far as he went: love will go a long way towards making her mind strong. But you must not forget that faith and hope are wanted too."

The conversation, thus begun, proved interesting enough to remove all the restraint his greeting had caused Miss Granard. They found they had mutual acquaintances, and by degrees he became so intent on what they were saying, that he took no heed of the entrance of Sir Marcus.

"I do not see Emily!" the latter exclaimed, as he took his cup of tea.

"What's that?—it is some one calling—it is Miss Wilmot's voice!" said Lewis, almost at the same moment; and he was half-way up the stairs before Adela could stop him. She flew rather than ran, with the repentant sense of having been careless in watching. A repentance which became almost too keen when she reached the landing-place near her room. Cecilia Wilmot, with a terrified face, stood there endeavouring to soothe Emily, who was in a paroxysm of sobs.

"Make haste, Miss Granard! I cannot quite make her out—I found her in this state," gasped the young lady; "she goes on repeating something about her mamma, insisting that she has been here. What *does* she mean?"

"Emily, my darling, what is it? I am here," said Adela, taking Miss Wilmot's place, who trembled sadly. Lewis Frankland could not help noticing that Miss Granard seemed unpleasantly struck by Cecilia's words, and, for one so self-possessed, considerably startled. Her voice had its usual effect, however, on the child: Emily threw back the hair that excitement had disordered, and clung round her neck, endeavouring to restrain her sobs sufficiently to speak.

"She saw me—saw me quite plain—in the study, downstairs."

"Who told you so, darling?" asked Adela, as calmly as her beating heart would allow.

"One of them; there used to be three, but I am not sure about the voice."

"A spirit, do you mean, Emily?"

"Yes," sobbed the poor girl. "Indeed, I was not thinking of them, or about anything but Coco, for he was not awake at first, and I had to sit and watch him."

"And, then—did you see anything?"

"Oh; no, I never see them; but I heard—and it told me that. I want to see mamma, if she can see me."

And she burst again into tears. Cecilia was by this time weeping for company. "I know what *that* longing is," she murmured to Lewis Frankland, who pressed her arm in his, and kindly advised her to return to the drawing-room with him. He heard Miss Combermere coming, and she would know best what to do for the child. Adela seconding the advice, Cecilia was fain to follow it, and gave her explanation to each individual she met. She had been sponging the stains on her dress, it appeared, and was just going into Miss Medlicott's room when she heard Emily, and found her in this excited state. The child must have been asleep, and dreaming, Cecilia added; but it went to one's heart to hear her—and again her bright eyes were suffused with tears of feeling, and Sir Marcus, as he passed, patted her kindly on the shoulder.

At his urgent request, the party, now crowding in the hall, returned to the drawing-room—with the exception of Ernest. As Cecilia told her story, she suddenly met his eyes fixed on her, and the expression in them made her falter and stammer in confusion. It quickly changed, however, to bitterness of spirit, as she perceived the keen interest he took in the matter. She turned away impatiently, to apologise to Lewis for being so foolish and taking up his time, and then tried to speak to Mrs. Archdale and answer her questions, but broke down all at once and utterly.

If she had studied for months she could not have taken a surer road to that lady's heart. Mrs. Archdale was touched, softened, charmed, by so much feeling in a girl who had appeared to have so little: and the looks she exchanged with Lewis Frankland showed her that he shared the emotion. By them, at the moment, Emily was only remembered as the cause of this touching display of sensibility, and even Mr. Bourne was moved to come up and stroke her head, and beg her to think no more about it.

"We must see, to-morrow, about going home, my dear," he said to his wife. "These scenes are always catching, and very unwholesome for young minds. We'll go home to-morrow, if she likes."

"Oh, take me away—take me away! I wish I could go to-night!" moaned Cecilia, with her head on Mrs. Archdale's shoulder, who supported her tenderly and whispered kind words of soothing. A

hint from Lewis had helped her to understand the effect that Emily's words had so suddenly produced, but she had not been an unobservant spectator of what had been going on during the last few days, and her womanly instinct helped her to the conclusion that something more than amiable sympathy or sorrow had caused these passionate tears. Could Ernest but have seen them, have seen her cling to his mother, and seem to implore a motherly shelter from the storm of her own spirit, he must have been gained, or brought back—Mrs. Archdale was not certain which was required. But that he had in some way troubled her young friend's peace she had already suspected, and felt now convinced of it. Gladly would she have summoned him had she dared; but she knew him too well to take such a step.

Miss Combermere had found him on the staircase, and took him aside for consultation.

"What is the meaning of this, Mr. Archdale?" she said. "The poor child must either have dreamed the contents of her mother's letter to Miss Granard, or somebody in the secret has told them to her. Which are we to believe?"

"Of course Miss Granard knows whether, or not, anyone could have got at the letter?"

"It was locked up in her writing-case. She says she is not quite sure whether her keys were in a safe place, but it never occurred to her that anyone would—would ——"

"Play the traitor. I should think not; but I own I do not like this state of things. I am going to make some enquiries for my own satisfaction."

"And when you have learned anything, come to my father's study. I am going to him there. Something must be done to put a stop to this, or that child will go out of her mind."

Ernest Archdale went to his own room, and rang for his page.

"Paul, what is the meaning of this?" was his first question, as it had been Kate's.

"I don't know, sir—I wish I did," was the ready answer. "Mr. Stephens and Mr. Charles were both on at me when you rang, and that was the first I had heard of it."

"Paul, that poor young lady will be driven into a nervous fever should she continue to be subject to this sort of thing. Tell me the honest truth—you have not been playing the spirit yourself again, have you?"

"You don't think I would, sir, after what I said? But you have only to ask—Mr. Stephens can account for every moment of my time, he and Mr. Charles. I have been cleaning plate and glass ever since dinner. What was it, please, that frightened poor Miss Emily again? Did she think she was called?"

Archdale explained: and he was certainly struck by the change in the boy's face as he listened.

"This is very serious, sir," he said, after a short silence. "I

thought at first it might have been Miss Emily's fancy—but this is something that must be looked into directly. He has got another confederate in the house."

Ernest was silent in his turn, and they looked steadily at each other.

"There is but one thing to be done in that case, Paul," said his master, at last. "I must make a complete confession to Sir Marcus. He is so good a friend that I should have done it sooner, but for my pride."

"You are quite right, sir; and if I may be so bold, I should ask the ladies to arrange not to leave Miss Stormount alone, if they can manage it, without letting her feel she is watched. Tell him all, sir—never mind what he may think of me. It's too serious a matter to keep to ourselves. I don't like the look of it at all."

There seemed little doubt he spoke the truth, and Ernest lost no time in seeking Sir Marcus, who was talking of the affair with Kate and the Archdeacon. A few kind words helped Ernest to tell his tale, which he did as briefly as possible, keeping out all mention of Cecilia, and only alluding to his embarrassments as a reason for his acquaintance with Cosmo Dangerfield. When he had told all, the Archdeacon caught him by the hand.

"I knew something of this, my boy, for I was in the place at the time. Everybody said you had foul play, and your only fault was in letting those fellows lead you into the scrape. As to that young imp, I saw him too, when I was visiting a sick woman over the stables, and he was just the kind of stuff out of which you may make something very bad or very good. I tell you frankly, the men suspect him. We have been asking about him, and Stephens thought he was with Charles, when Charles believed he was under the eye of Stephens. His *alibi* is not perfect by any means."

"May be so, but I believe him. It would be difficult, perhaps, to explain why; but I have confided in him so much, that I cannot lose faith now."

"I think with you," said Kate, impulsively. "If there has been a trick played at all, the boy had no hand in it. The mystery is, how did the contents of that letter transpire? They were only known to us four."

"Ernest," said Sir Marcus, who had been silent till then, "you should have thought twice before you engaged that boy; but it is done, and I hope it may be the saving of him. We must now think of you, and get you out of Dangerfield's clutches; for, unless I mistake the man, he will take his revenge upon you for crossing him. Your mother must not be worried—she has worries enough. Here are two old fellows who have only been waiting for a little confidence on your part to offer you assistance, on the simple condition that you do not run such a risk again. No thanks, my dear fellow; you shall repay us out of your savings; and this is a simple matter of precaution. We must cut off all communication with the enemy without delay. Call the boy in: I shall soon see if he is to be trusted."

Paul was not far off, and after one look at his master's flushed cheeks, for the kindness had moved Ernest deeply, he stood erect before Sir Marcus Combermere, waiting to be questioned.

"My lad," said the latter, "we have been hearing a strange story, and have to thank you for a warning. I tell you plainly there are some appearances against you, but I should like to believe you are in earnest in trying to protect an innocent and injured young lady. Are you prepared to break with Professor Dangerfield at all hazards, and to all intents and purposes?"

"If you please, Sir Marcus, may I ask you one thing?"

"Certainly."

"You are a doctor, sir, so you must know. Has he really done her harm?"

"I hope not for life, my boy; but I have no doubt, from what I observe, that she has gone through much suffering, and that every time it is renewed the danger increases. You best know how much you have to be sorry for, and how far you have assisted her step-father in troubling her peace."

"He always told me, sir, that her happiness depended on her being with him—that no one understood her as he did, and that her mother's friends wanted to get her into their hands, on account of her money. And he promised me, if all went well with my help, he would set me up in the world, that I might make my fortune."

"Has he done anything for you yet?"

"He gave me a pound or two in my pocket, and my living."

"Now, answer me one thing honestly, before I repeat my first question—why did you ask Mr. Archdale to engage you?"

"Well, sir, I liked the look of him, and I didn't think he had been well treated. But that was not all. When you and the young ladies were in this room that first morning, talking about your doubts of me, I was up there, behind the curtain, and heard all you said."

Sir Marcus and Kate looked at each other with almost comical surprise, and involuntarily began considering what they did say.

"You certainly are a nice young fellow to take into a gentleman's service," said Sir Marcus.

"Well, sir, you wanted to know if I was ready to break with the Professor, and go in with you. If I had meant to play fast and loose, I need not have told you this."

"Very true; and I respect you for doing it. You will stand by the young ladies, then, come what may?"

"I will, sir; and if I may be so bold, I would give you a bit of advice."

"What is that, Paul?"

"Send them out of your house as soon as you can."

(*To be continued.*)

LADY JENKINS.

"IF Aunt Jenkins were the shrewd woman she used to be, I'd lay the whole case before her, and have it out; but she is not," contended Dan Jenkins, tilting the tongs in his hand, as we sat round the dying embers of the surgery fire.

His brother Sam and I had walked home together from Mrs. Knox's soirée, and we overtook Dan in the town. Another soirée had been held in Lefford that night, which Dan had promised himself to before knowing Mrs. Knox would have one. We all three turned into the surgery. Dr. Knox was out with a patient, and Sam had to wait up for him. Sam had been telling his brother what we witnessed up at Rose Villa—the promenade that Captain Collinson and Mina had stolen in the moonlight. As for me, though I heard what Sam said, and put in a confirming word here and there, I was thinking my own thoughts. In a small way, nothing had ever puzzled me much more than the letter Charlotte Knox had seen. Who was Madame St. Vincent? and who was her sister, that I, Johnny Ludlow, might not meet her?

"You see," continued Dan, "one reason why I can't help suspecting the fellow, is this—that he does not address Mina openly. If he were honest and above board, he would go in for her before all the world. He'd not do it in secret."

"What do you suspect him of?" cried Sam.

"I don't know. I do suspect him—that he is somehow not on the square. It's not altogether about Mina; but I have no confidence in the man."

Sam laughed. "Of course you have not, Dan. You want to keep Mina for yourself."

Dan pitched his soft hat at Sam's head, and let fall the tongs with a clatter.

"Collinson seems to be all right," I put in. "He is going up to London to a levée and he is going to buy an estate. He told me so to-night in the supper-room."

"Oh, in one sense of the word the fellow is all right," acknowledged Dan. "He is what he pretends to be; he is in the army list; and, for all I know to the contrary, he may have enough gold to float an argosy of ships. What I ask is, why he should go sneaking after Mina *when he does not care for her.*"

"That may be just a fallacy of ours, Dan," said his brother.

"No, it's not. Collinson is in love with Madame St. Vincent; not with Mina."

"Then why does he spoon after Mina?"

"That's just it—why?"

"Any way, I don't think Madame is in love with him, Dan. It was proposed that he should take aunt home to-night, and Madame was as tart as you please over it, letting all the room know that she did not want him."

"Put it down so," agreed Dan, stooping to pick up the tongs. "Say that he is not fond of Madame, but of Mina, and would like to make her his wife: why does he not go about it in a proper manner; court her openly, speak to her mother; instead of pursuing her covertly like a sneak?"

"It may be his way of courting."

"May it! It is anything but a right way. He is for ever seeking to meet her on the sly. I know it. He got her out in the garden to-night to a meeting, you say: you and Johnny Ludlow saw it."

"Dicky saw it too, and Charlotte got the truth out of him. There may be something in what you say, Dan."

"There's a great deal in what I say," contended Dan, his honest face ablaze with earnestness. "Look here. Here's an officer and a gentleman; a rich man as we are given to believe; and we've no reason to doubt it. He seems to spend enough—Carter saw him lose five pounds last night, betting at billiards. If he is in love with a young lady, there's nothing to hinder a man like that from going openly in for her——"

"Except her age," struck in Sam. "He may think they'll refuse Mina to him on that score."

"Stuff!—I wish you'd not interrupt me, Sam. Every day will help to remedy that—and he might undertake to wait a year or two. But I feel sure and certain he does not really care for Mina: that, if he is seeking in this underhand way to get her promise to marry him, he has some ulterior motive. My own belief is he would like to kidnap her."

Sam laughed. "You mean, kidnap her money?"

"Well, I don't see what else it can be. The fellow may have outrun the constable, and need some ready money to put him straight. Rely upon this much, Sam—that his habits are as fast as they can well be. I have been learning a little about him lately."

Sam made no answer. He began to look grave.

"Not at all the sort of man who ought to marry Mina, or any other tender young girl. He'd break her heart in a twelvemonth."

Sam spoke up. "I said to Johnny Ludlow, just now, that it might be better to tell Dr. Knox. Perhaps ——"

"What about?" interrupted the doctor himself, pouncing in upon us, and catching the words as he opened the door. "What have you to tell Dr. Knox about, Sam? And why are all you young men sitting up here? You'd be better in bed."

An additional straw, you know, breaks the camel's back. Whether

Sam would really have disclosed the matter to Dr. Knox, I can't say; the doctor's presence and the doctor's question decided it.

Sam spoke in a low tone, standing behind the drug-counter with the doctor, who had gone round to look at some entry in what they called the day-book, and had lighted a gas-burner to do it by. Dr. Knox made no remark of any kind while he listened, his eyes fixed on the book: one might have thought he did not hear but for his compressed lips.

"If she were not so young, sir—a child, as may be said—I should not have presumed to speak," concluded Sam. "I don't know whether I have done wrong or right."

"Right," emphatically pronounced the doctor.

But the word had hardly left his lips when there occurred a startling interruption. The outer door of the surgery, the one he had come in by, was violently drummed at, and then burst open. Charlotte Knox, Miss Mack the governess, and Sally the maid—the same Sally who had been at Rose Villa when the trouble occurred about Janet Carey, and the same Miss Mack who had replaced Janet—came flocking in.

"Dicky's lost, Arnold," exclaimed Charlotte.

"Dicky lost!" repeated Dr. Knox. "How can he be lost at this time of night?"

"He *is*. And we had nearly gone to bed without finding it out. The people had all left, and the doors were locked, when somebody —Gerty, I think—began to complain of Dicky ——"

"It was I who spoke," interposed the governess; and though she was fat enough for two people she had the meekest little voice in the world, and allowed herself to be made a perfect tool of at Rose Villa. "Master Dicky did behave very ill at supper, eating rudely of everything, and ——"

"Yes, yes," broke in Charlotte, "I remember now, Macky. You said Dicky ought to be restrained, and you wondered he was not sick; and then mamma called out 'But where is Dicky?' 'Gone to bed to sleep off his supper,' we all told her: and she sent Sally up to see that he had put his candle out."

"And in course," interrupted Sally, thinking it was her turn to begin, "when I found the room empty, and saw by the moonlight that Master Dicky had not come to bed at all, I ran down to say so. And his mamma got angry, accusing us servants of having carelessly locked him out of doors. And he can't be found, sir—as Miss Lotty says."

"No, he cannot be found anywhere," added Lotty. "We have searched the house and the gardens, and been in to enquire at Lady Jenkins's; and he is *gone*. And mamma is frantic, and said we were to come to you, Arnold."

"Master Dicky's playing truant: he has gone off with some of the guests," observed Dr. Knox.

"Well, mamma is putting herself into a frightful fever over him, Arnold. That old well at the back was opened the day before yesterday: she says Dicky may have strayed there and fallen in."

"Dicky's after more mischief than that," said the doctor, sagely. "A well in a solitary field would have no charms for Dicky. I tell you, Lotty, he must have marched home with somebody or other. Had you any lads up there to-night?"

"No, not any. You know mamma never will have them. Lads, *and* Dicky, would be too much."

"If Master Dicky have really gone off, as the doctor thinks, I'd lay my next quarter's wages that it's with Captain Collinson," cried Sally. "He is always wanting to be after the Captain."

Lotty lifted her face, a gleam of intelligence flashing across it. "That's it," she said. "I should not wonder if it is. He has strayed off after, or with, Captain Collinson. What is to be done, Arnold?"

"Not with him, I should think," observed the doctor. "Captain Collinson, if he possesses any sense or consideration, would order Dicky back at once."

"Won't you come with us to the Captain's lodgings, Arnold, and see?" cried Charlotte. "It would not do, would it, for us to go there alone at this time of night? The Captain may be in bed."

Arnold Knox looked at her; looked at the three of them, as if he thought they were enough without him. He was nearly done up with his long day's work.

"I suppose I had better go with you, Lotty," he said. "Though I don't think Captain Collinson would kidnap any one of you if you went alone."

"Oh dear, no; it is Mina he wants to kidnap, not us," answered Lotty, freely. And Arnold glanced at her keenly as he heard the words.

Did you ever know a fellow in the hey-day of his health and restlessness who was not ready for any night expedition—especially if it were to search after something lost? Dr. Knox took up his hat to accompany the visitors, and we three took up ours.

We proceeded in a body through the moonlit streets to Collinson's lodgings; the few stragglers who met us, no doubt taking us all for benighted wayfarers trudging home from some one or other of the noted Lefford soirées. Collinson had the rooms at the hairdresser's —good rooms, famous as the best lodgings in the town. The gas was alight in his sitting-room over the shop: a pretty fair proof that the Captain was yet up.

"Stay, Lotty," said Dr. Knox, arresting her impatient hand, that was lifted to pull the bell. "No need to arouse the house: I daresay Pink and his family are in bed. I will go up to Collinson."

It was easy to say so, but difficult to do it. Dr. Knox turned the handle of the door to enter, and found it fastened. He had to ring, after all.

Nobody answered it. Another ring and another shared the same fate. Dr. Knox then searched for some small loose stones, and flung them up at the window. It brought forth no more than the bell had.

"Dicky can't be there, or that gravel would have brought him to the window," decided Lotty. "I should say Captain Collinson is not there, either."

"He may be in his chamber at the back," observed Dr. Knox. And he rang again.

Presently, after a spell of at least ten minutes' waiting, and no end of ringing, an upper window was opened and a head appeared—that of the hairdresser.

"Whatever's the matter?" called out he, seeing the lot of us below. "It's not fire, is it?"

"I am sorry to disturb you, Pink," called back Dr. Knox. "It is Captain Collinson I want. Is he in, do you know?"

"Yes, sir; he came in about twenty minutes ago, and somebody with him, for I heard him talking," answered Pink. "He must be in his sitting-room, if he is not gone to bed."

"There is a light in the room, but I don't think he can be in. I have thrown up some gravel, and he does not answer."

"I'll come down and see, sir."

Pink, the most obliging little man in the world, descended to the Captain's room and thence to us at the door. Captain Collinson was not in. He had gone out again, and left his gas alight.

"You say someone came in with him, Pink. Was it a young lad?"

"I can't tell, sir. I heard the captain's latch-key, and I heard him come on upstairs, talking to somebody; but I was just dropping off to sleep, so did not notice much."

That the somebody was young Dick, and that Captain Collinson had gone out to march Dick home again, seemed only probable. There was nothing for it but to go on to Rose Villa and ascertain: and we started for it, after a short consultation.

"I shall not have the remotest idea where to look for Dick if he is not there," remarked Dr. Knox.

"And in that case, I do believe mamma will have a fit," added Charlotte. "A real fit, I mean, Arnold. I wish something could be done with Dicky! The house is always in a commotion."

Captain Collinson was at Rose Villa, whether Dicky was or not. At the garden gate, talking to Mina in the moonlight, stood he, apparently saying good-night to her.

"Dicky? oh dear, yes; I have just brought Dicky back," laughed the captain, before Dr. Knox had well spoken his young half-brother's name, while Mina ran indoors like a frightened hare. "Upon getting home just now I found some small mortal stealing in after me, and it proved to be Dicky. He followed me home to get a top

I had promised him, and which I forgot to bring up here when I came to-night."

"I hope you did not give it him," said Dr. Knox.

"Yes, I did. I should never have got him back without," added the captain. "Good-night."

He laughed again as he went away. Dicky's vagaries seemed to be rare fun for him.

Dicky was spinning the top on the kitchen table when we went in —for that's where they had all gathered: Mrs. Knox, Gerty, Kate, and the cook. A big humming-top, nearly as large and as noisy as Dick. Dr. Knox caught up the top and caught Dicky by the hand, and took both into the parlour.

"Now then, sir!" he sternly asked. "What did you mean by this night's escapade?"

"Oh, Arnold, don't scold him," implored Mrs. Knox, following them in with her hands held up. "It *was* naughty of him, of course, and it gave me a dreadful fright; but it was perhaps excusable, and he is at home safe again. The captain was to bring the top, and did not, and poor Dicky ran after him to get it."

"You be quiet, Arnold; I am not to be scolded," put in cunning Dicky. "You just give me my top."

"As to scolding you, I don't know that it would be of any further use: the time seems to have gone by for it, and I must take other measures," spoke Dr. Knox. "Come up to bed now, sir. I shall see you in it before I leave."

"But I want my top."

"Which you will not have," said the doctor: and he marched off Dicky.

"How cross you are with him, Arnold!" spoke his step-mother when he came down again, leaving Dicky howling on his pillow for the top.

"It needs somebody to be cross with him," observed Dr. Knox.

"He is only a little boy, remember."

"He is big enough and old enough to be checked and corrected —if it ever is to be done at all. I will see you to-morrow: I wish to have some conversation with you."

"About Dicky?" she hastily asked.

"About him and other things. Mina," he added in a low tone, as he passed her on his way out, but I, being next to him, caught the words, "I did not like to see you at the gate with Captain Collinson at this hour. Do not let it occur again. Young maidens cannot be too modest."

And, at the reproof, Miss Mina coloured to the very roots of her hair.

II.

THEY sat in the small garden room, its glass doors open to the spring air, now becoming redolent of the approaching summer. Mrs. Knox wore an untidy cotton gown, of a flaming crimson and white pattern, and her dark face looked hot and angry. Dr. Knox, sitting behind the table, was being annoyed as much as he could be annoyed—and no one ever annoyed him but his step-mother—as the lines in his patient brow betrayed.

"It is for his own good that I suggest this; his best welfare," urged Dr. Knox. "Left to exercise his will much longer, he must not be. Therefore I say that he must be placed entirely at school."

"You only propose it to thwart me," cried Mrs. Knox. "A fine cost it will be!"

"It will not be your cost. I pay his schooling now, and I shall pay it then. My father left me, young though I was, Dicky's guardian, and I must do this. I wonder you do not see that it will be the very best thing for Dicky. Everybody but yourself sees that, as things are, the boy is being ruined."

Mrs. Knox looked sullenly through the open doors by which she sat; she tapped her foot impatiently upon the worn mat, lying on the threshold.

"I know you'll not rest until you have carried your point and separated us, Arnold; it has been in your mind to do it this long while. And my boy is the only thing I care for in life."

"It is for Dicky's own best interest," reiterated Dr. Knox. "Of course he is dear to you; it would be unnatural if he were not; but you surely must wish to see him grow up a good and self-reliant man: not an idle and self-indulgent one."

"Why don't you say outright that your resolve is taken and nothing can alter it; that you are going to banish him to school to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow, but he shall go at the half-quarter. The child will be ten times happier for it; believe that."

"Do you *really* mean it?" she questioned, her black eyes flashing fury at Arnold. "Will nothing deter you?"

"Nothing," he replied, in a low, firm tone. "I—bear with me a moment, mother—I cannot let Dicky run riot any longer. He is growing up the very incarnation of selfishness; he thinks the world was made for him alone; you and his sisters are only regarded by him as so many ministers to his good pleasure. See how he treats you all. See how he treats the servants. Were I to allow this state of things to continue, how should I be fulfilling my obligation to my dead father?—my father and Dicky's."

"I will hear no more," spoke Mrs. Knox, possibly thinking the argument was getting too strong for her. "*I* have wanted to speak

to you, Arnold, and I may as well do it now. Things must be put on a different footing up here."

"What things?"

"Money matters. I cannot continue to do upon my small income."

Arnold Knox passed his hand across his troubled brow, almost in despair. Oh, what a weary subject this was! Not for long together did she ever give him rest from it.

"Your income is sufficient, mother; I am tired of saying it. It is between three and four hundred a-year; and you are free from house rent."

"Why don't you remind me that the house is yours, and have done with it!" she cried, her voice harsh and coarse as a raven's.

"Well, it is mine," he said good-humouredly.

"Yes; and instead of settling it upon me when you married, you must needs settle it on your wife! Don't *you* talk of selfishness, Arnold."

"My wife does not derive any benefit from it. It has made no difference to you."

"She would derive it, though, if you died. Where should I be then?"

"I am not going to die, I hope. Oh, mother, if you only knew how these discussions vex me!"

"Then you should show yourself generous."

"Generous!" he exclaimed, in a pained tone. And, goaded to it by his remembrance of what he had done for her in the present and in the past, he went on to speak more plainly than he had ever spoken yet. "Do you forget that a great portion of what you enjoy should, by right, be mine?"

"Yours!" she scornfully said.

"Yes: mine. Not by legal right, but by moral. When my father died he left the whole of his property to you. Considerably more than the half of that property had been brought to him by my mother: some people might have thought that much should have descended to her son."

"He did not leave me the whole. You had a share."

"I had a sum of five hundred pounds left me, for a specific purpose—the completion of my medical education. Mother, I have never grumbled at this; never. It was my father's will and pleasure that the whole should be yours, and that it should go to your children after you; and I am content to think that he did for the best. The house was obliged to come to me; it had been so settled at my mother's marriage; but you have continued to live in it, and I have not said you nay."

"It is like you to remind me of all this!"

"I could remind you of more," he rejoined, chafing at her unjust words, at her resentful manner. "That for years I impoverished

myself to help you to augment this income. Three parts of what I earned, before my partnership with Mr. Tamlyn, I gave to you."

"Well, I needed it. Do, for goodness' sake let the past alone, if you can: where's the use of recalling it? Would you have us starve? Would you see me taken off to prison? And that's what it will come to, unless I can get some money to pay up with. That table-drawer that you've got your elbow on, is chock-full of bills. I've not paid one for these six months."

"I cannot think what it is you do with your money."

"Do with my money! Why, it goes in a hundred ways. How very ignorant you are, Arnold! Look at what dress costs, for myself and four girls! Look at what the soirées cost! We have to give choice dishes now; lobster salads and raspberry creams, and all kinds of expensive things. Madame St. Vincent introduced *that*."

"You must put down the soirées and the dress—if you cannot keep them within the bounds of your income."

"Thank you. Just as I had to put down the pony-carriage and James. How cruel you are, Arnold!"

"I hope I am not. I do not wish to be."

"It will take two hundred pounds to set me straight; and I must have it from you, or from somebody else," avowed Mrs. Knox.

"You certainly cannot have it, or any portion of it, from me. My expenses are heavy now, and I have my own children coming on."

His tone was unmistakably decisive, and Mrs. Knox saw that it was so. For many years she had been in the habit of regarding Arnold as analogous to a bucket in a well, which brings up water every time it is let down. Just so had he brought up money for her from his pocket. But that was over now: and he had to bear these reproaches periodically.

"You know that you *can* let me have it, Arnold. You can lend it me from Mina's money."

His face flushed slightly. He pushed his fair hair back with a gesture of annoyance.

"The last time you spoke of *that* I begged you never to mention it again," he said, in a low tone. "Why, what do you take me for, mother?"

"Take you for?"

"You must know that I could not touch Mina's money without becoming a false trustee. Men have been brought to the bar of their country to answer for a less crime than that would be."

"If Mina married, you would have to hand over the whole of it."

"Of course I should. First of all taking care that it was settled upon her."

"I don't see the necessity of that. Mina could let me have what she pleased of it."

"Talking of Mina," resumed Dr. Knox, passing by her remark, "I think you must look a little closely after her. She is

more intimate, I fancy, with Captain Collinson than is desirable, and ——"

"Suppose Captain Collinson wants to marry her?" interrupted Mrs. Knox.

"Has he told you that he wants to?"

"No; not in so many words. But he evidently likes her. What a good match it would be!"

"Mina is too young to be married yet. And Captain Collinson cannot, I should suppose, have any intention of the sort. If he had, he would speak out: when it would be time enough to consider and discuss his proposal. Until he does speak, I must beg of you not to allow Mina to be alone with him."

"She never is alone with him."

"I think she is, at odd moments. Only last night I saw her with him at the gate. Previous to that, while your soirée was agate, Dicky—I believe he could tell you so if you asked him—saw them walking together in the garden, the captain's arm round her waist."

"Girls are so fond of flirting! And young men think no harm of a little familiarity."

"Just so. But for remembering this, I should speak to Captain Collinson. The thought, that there may be nothing serious in it, prevents me. At any rate, I beg of you to take care of Mina."

"And the money I want?" she asked, as he took up his hat to go.

But Dr. Knox, shortly repeating that he had no money to give her, made his escape. He had been ruffled enough already. One thing was certain: that if some beneficent sprite from fairyland increased Mrs. Knox's annual income cent. per cent., she would still, and ever, be in embarrassment. Arnold knew this.

Mrs. Knox sat on, revolving difficulties. How many similar interviews she had held with her step-son, and how often he had been brought round to pay her bills, she could but remember. Would he do it now? A most unpleasant doubt, that he would not, lay upon her.

Presently the entrance was darkened by some tall form interposing itself between herself and the sunlight. She glanced up and saw Captain Collinson. He stood there smiling, his tasselled cane jauntily swayed in his left hand.

"My dear madam, you look troubled. Is anything amiss?"

"Troubled! the world's full of trouble, I think," spoke Mrs. Knox, in a pettish kind of way. "Dr. Knox has been here to vex me."

Captain Collinson stepped airily in, and sat down near Mrs. Knox, his eyes expressing proper concern: indignation blended with sympathy.

"Very inconsiderate of Dr. Knox: very wrong! Can I help you in any way, my dear lady?"

"Arnold is always inconsiderate. First, he begins upon me about

Dicky, threatening to put him altogether away at school, poor ill-used child! Next, he ——"

"Sweet little angel!" interlarded the captain.

"Next, he refuses to lend me a trifling sum of money—and he knows how badly I want it!"

"Paltry!" ejaculated the captain. "When he must be making so much of it!"

"Rolling in it, so to say," confirmed Mrs. Knox. "Look at the large practice he has! But if he did not give me any of his, he might advance me a trifle of Mina's."

"Of course he might," warmly acquiesced Captain Collinson.

What with the warmth and the sympathy, Mrs. Knox rather lost her head. Many of us are betrayed on occasion into doing the same. She said more than she should say.

"You see, if Mina married, as I pointed out to Arnold, the money would no longer be under his control at all. It would be hers to do as she pleased with. She is a dear, good, generous girl, and would not scruple to let me have one or two hundred pounds. What would such a trifle be out of the whole seven thousand?"

"Very true; nothing at all," cried the captain, toying with his handsome beard.

"But no; Arnold will not hear of it: he answered me in a way that I should not like to repeat. He also said that he should take care, if Mina did marry before she was of age, that her money was settled upon her; said it on purpose to thwart me."

"Cruel!" aspirated the captain.

"Some girls might be tempted to marry off-hand, and say nothing to him, if only to get the fortune out of his harsh control. I don't say Mina would."

"Miser! My dear madam, rely upon it that whenever Miss Mina does marry, her husband will join with her in letting you have as much money as you wish. I am sure it would be his pride and pleasure so to do."

Was it a covert promise? meant to be understood as such? Mrs. Knox took it for one. She came out of her dumps, and felt exalted to the seventh heaven.

Meanwhile, Arnold Knox was with Lady Jenkins, to whom he had gone on quitting his step-mother. The old lady, up and dressed, sat in her dining-room. There appeared to be no change in her condition; drowsy, lethargic, gentle, yielding; imbecile, or not many shades removed from it. And yet, neither Dr. Knox nor his fellow-practitioner could see any cause to account for this. Of bodily illness she had none: except that she seemed feeble.

"I wish you would tell me what it is you are taking," said Dr. Knox, bending over her and speaking in a low, persuasive tone. "I fear you are taking something that does you harm."

Lady Jenkins looked up at him, apparently trying to consider. "I've not taken anything since I took the physic," she said.

"What physic?"

"The bottles that Mr. Tamlyn sent me."

"But that was when you were ill. Are you sure you have not taken anything else?—that you are not taking anything? Any"—he dropped his voice to a still lower key—"opiates? Laudanum, for instance?"

Lady Jenkins shook her head. "I never took any sort of opiate in my life."

"Then it is being given to her without her knowledge," mentally decided the doctor. "I hear you were at the next door last night, as gay as the best of them," he resumed aloud, changing his tone to a light one.

"Ay. I put on my new bronze satin gown: Patty said I was to. Janet sang her pretty songs."

"Did she? When are you coming to spend an evening with us? She will sing them again for you."

"I'd like to come—if I may."

"If you may! There's nothing to prevent it. You are quite well enough."

"There's Patty. We shall have to ask her whether I may."

Anything Arnold Knox might have rejoined to this, was stopped by the entrance of Patty herself, a light blue shawl on her shoulders. A momentary surprise crossed her face at sight of the doctor.

"Oh, Dr. Knox! I did not know you were here," she said, as she threw off the shawl. "I was running about the garden for a few minutes. What a lovely day it is!—the sun so warm."

"It is that. Lady Jenkins ought to be out in it. Should you not like to take a run in the garden?" he laughingly added to her.

"Should I, Patty?"

The utter abnegation of will both of tone and look, as she cast an appealing glance at her companion, struck Dr. Knox forcibly. He looked at both of them from under his rather over-hanging eyebrows. Did Mme. St. Vincent extort this obedience?—or was it simply the old lady's imbecility? Surely it must be the latter.

"I think," said Madame, "a walk in the garden will be very pleasant for you, dear Lady Jenkins. Lettice shall bring down your things. The may-tree is budding beautifully."

"Already!" said the doctor: "I should like to see it. Will you go with me, Madame? I have two minutes to spare."

Madame St. Vincent, evincing no surprise, though she may have felt it, put the blue shawl on her shoulders again and followed Dr. Knox. The may-tree was nearly at the end of the garden, down by the shrubbery.

"Mr. Tamlyn mentioned to you, I believe, that we suspected something improper, in the shape of opiates, was being given to Lady

Jenkins," began Dr. Knox, never as much as lifting his eyes to the budding may-tree.

"Yes; I remember that he did," replied Mme. St. Vincent. "I hardly gave it a second thought."

"Tamlyn said you had a difficulty in believing it. Nevertheless, I feel assured that it is so."

"Impossible, Dr. Knox."

"It seems impossible to you, I daresay. But that it is being done, I would stake my head upon. Lady Jenkins is being stupefied in some way: and I have brought you out here to tell you so, and to ask your co-operation in tracing out the culprit."

"But—I beg your pardon, Dr. Knox—who would give her anything of the kind? You don't suspect me, I hope."

"If I suspected you, my dear lady, I should not be talking to you as I am. The person we must suspect is Lettice Lane."

"Lettice Lane!"

"I have reason to think it. Lettice Lane's antecedents are not, I fear, quite so clear as they might be: though it is only recently I have known this. At any rate, she is the personal attendant on Lady Jenkins; the only one of them who has the opportunity of being alone with her. I must beg of you to watch Lettice Lane."

Mme. St. Vincent looked a little bewildered; perhaps felt so. Stretching up her hand, she plucked one of the budding may-blossoms.

"Mr. Tamlyn hinted at Lettice also. I have always felt confidence in Lettice. As to drugs—Dr. Knox, I don't believe a word of it."

"*Lady Jenkins is being drugged*," emphatically pronounced Dr. Knox. "And you must watch Lettice Lane. If Lettice is innocent, we must look elsewhere."

"Shall I tax Lettice with it?"

"Certainly not. You would make a good detective," he added with a laugh; "opening your hand to the enemy. Surely, Mme. St. Vincent, you must yourself see that Lady Jenkins is being tampered with. Look at her state this morning: though she is not quite as bad as she is sometimes."

"I have known some old people sleep nearly perpetually."

"So have I. But theirs is natural sleep, induced by exhausted nature: hers is not natural."

"But—to drug her! No, I cannot believe it. And where would be the motive?"

"That I know not. You will watch Lettice Lane?"

"I will," she answered, after a pause. "Of course it *may* be as you say; I now see it. I will watch her to the very utmost of my ability from this hour."

III.

"DEAR JOHNNY,

"I expect your stay at Lefford is drawing towards a close; mine is, here. It might be pleasant if we travelled home together. I could take Lefford on my way—starting from hence by an early train—and pick you up. You need somebody to take care of you, you know. Let me hear when you intend to be ready. I will arrange my departure accordingly.

"Hope you have enjoyed yourself, old fellow.

"Ever yours, J. T."

The above letter from Tod, who was still in Leicestershire, reached me one morning at breakfast-time. Dr. Knox and Janet, old Tamlyn—all the lot of them—called out that they could not spare me yet. Even Cattledon graciously intimated that she should miss me. Janet wrote to Tod, telling him he was to take Lefford on his way, as he proposed, and to stay a week when he did come.

It was, I think, that same day that some news reached us touching Captain Collinson—that he was going to be married. At least, that he had made an offer, and was accepted. Not to Mina Knox; but to an old girl (the epithet was Sam's) named Belmont. Miss Belmont lived with her father at a nice place on the London Road, half a mile beyond Jenkins House; he had a great deal of money, and she was his only child. She was very plain, very dowdy, and quite forty years of age; but very good, going about amidst the poor with tracts and soup. If the tidings were true, and Captain Collinson *had* made Miss Belmont an offer, it appeared pretty evident that his object was her money: he could not well have fallen in love with her, or court a wife so much older than himself.

When taxed with the fact—and it was old Tamlyn who did it, meeting him opposite the market-house—Collinson simpered, and stroked his dark beard, and said Lefford was fond of marvels. But he did not deny it. Half an hour later he and Miss Belmont were seen together in the High Street. She had her old cloth mantle on and her brown bonnet as close as a Quaker's, and carried her flat district basket in her hand. The Captain presented a contrast, with his superb dandy-cut clothes and his flourishing ebony cane.

"I think it must be quite true," Janet observed, as we watched them pass the house. "And I shall be glad if it is: Arnold has been tormenting himself with the fancy that the gallant captain was thinking of little Mina."

A day or two after this, it chanced that Dr. Knox had to visit Sir Henry Westmorland, who had managed to give a hard twist to his ankle. Sir Henry was one of those sociable, good-hearted men that nobody can help liking; a rather elderly bachelor. He and Tamlyn

were old friends, and we had all dined at Foxgrove about a week ago.

"Would you like to go over with me, Johnny?" asked Dr. Knox when he was starting.

I said I should like it very much, and got into the "conveyance," the doctor letting me drive. Thomas was not with us. We soon reached Foxgrove: a low, straggling, red-brick mansion, standing in a small park, about two miles and a half from Lefford.

Dr. Knox went in; leaving me and the conveyance on the smooth wide gravel-drive before the house. Presently a groom came up to take charge of it, saying Sir Henry was asking for me. He had seen me from the window.

Sir Henry was lying on a sofa near the window, and Knox was already beginning upon the ankle. A little, gentlemanly man, nearly bald, sat on the ottoman in the middle of the room. I found it was one Major Leckie.

Somehow—are these trifles *chance?*—the conversation turned upon India. I think Knox spoke of some snake-bite in a man's ankle that had laid him by for a month or two: it was no other than the late whilom Mayor, Sir Daniel Jenkins. Upon which, Major Leckie began relating his experience of some reptile bites in India. He had been home nearly two years upon sick leave, he said, and was now going back again.

"The 30th Bengal Cavalry!" repeated Dr. Knox, as Major Leckie happened to mention that regiment—which was his, and the Doctor remembered that it was also Captain Collinson's. "One of the officers of that regiment is staying here now."

"Is he!" cried the Major, briskly. "Which of them?"

"Captain Collinson."

"Collinson!" echoed the Major, his whole face alight with pleasure. "Where is he? How long has he been here? I did not know he had left India."

"He came home last autumn, I fancy; was not well, and got twelve months' leave. He has been staying at Lefford for some time."

"I should like to see him! Good old Collinson! He and I were close friends. He is a nice fellow."

"Old, you style him!" cried Dr. Knox. "I should rather call him young—of the two."

Major Leckie laughed. "It is a word we are all given to use, doctor. Of course Collinson's not old in years. Why is he staying at Lefford?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Unless it is that he has fallen in love. I heard him remark one day that the air of the place suited him."

"Ah ha, Master Collinson!" laughed the major. "In love, are you, sir! Caught at last, are you! Who is the lady?"

"Nay, I spoke but in jest," returned Dr. Knox. "He seems to be a general admirer; but I don't know that it is anybody in particular

Report has mentioned one or two ladies, but report is a false town crier."

"Well, she will be in luck—whoever gets him. He is one of the nicest, truest fellows I know; and will make a rare good husband."

"It is said he has private means. Do you know whether that's true?"

"He has very good private means. His father left him a fortune. Sometimes we fancy he will not stay with us long. I should not be surprised if he sells out while he is at home, and settles down."

"Johnny Ludlow heard him say something the other night to that effect," observed the doctor, looking at me.

"Yes," I said, confirming the words. "He is about buying an estate now, I believe. But he talked of going back to India for a few years."

"I hope he will. There's not a man amongst the lot of us, that I would not rather spare than Collinson. I *should* like to see him. I might walk into Lefford now—if you will give me his address, doctor. Will you spare me for an hour or two, Sir Henry?"

"Well, I must, I suppose," grumbled Sir Henry. "It's rather bad of you, though, Leckie; and after putting me off with so miserably short a stay. You get here at ten o'clock last night, and you go off at ten o'clock to-night! Fine behaviour that is!"

"I am obliged to go to-night, Westmorland; you know I am and I could not get to you earlier, although I tried. I won't be away a minute longer than I can help. I can walk into Lefford in half an hour—my pace is a quick one. No; and I won't stay an unconscionable time with Collinson," he added, in answer to a growl of the baronet's. "Trust me. I'll be back under two hours."

"Bring him back with you for the rest of the day," said Sir Henry.

"Oh, thank you. And I'm sure you will say he is the best fellow going. I wonder you and he have not found out one another before."

"If you don't mind taking a seat in yonder nondescript vehicle—that Mr. Johnny Ludlow here has the audacity to say must have been built in the year One," laughed Dr. Knox, pointing outside, "I can drive you to Captain Collinson's lodgings."

"A friend in need is a friend indeed," cried the Major, laughing also. "What style of vehicle do you call it?"

"*We* call it the conveyance. As to its style—well, I never had the opportunity of asking that of the builder. I believe my father bought it second-hand when he first went into practice many a year ago."

The doctor drove this time; Major Leckie sitting beside him, I in the perch behind. Leaving the Major at the hairdresser's, upon reaching Lefford, Dr. Knox and I went home. And this is what occurred—as we heard later.

Ringing at the private door, which was Captain Collinson's proper entrance, a young servant girl appeared, and—after the manner of many young country servants—sent Major Leckie alone up to Captain Collinson's rooms, saying she supposed the captain was at home. It turned out that he was not at home. Seated before the fire was a gentleman in a crimson dressing-gown and slippers, smoking a huge pipe.

"Come in," cried out he, in answer to the major's knock.

"I beg your pardon," said the major, entering. "I understood that Captain Collinson lodged here."

"He does lodge here," replied he of the dressing-gown, putting his pipe into the fender, as he rose. "What is it that you want with him?"

"I only called to see him. I am one of his brother officers—home on sick leave; as I understand he is."

"Collinson is out," said the gentleman. "I am sorry it should happen so. Can you leave any message?"

"Will he be long? I should much like to see him."

He will be back to dinner to-night; not much before that, I think. He is gone by train to—to—some place a few miles off. Boom—or Room—or Doom—or some such name. I am a stranger here."

"Toome, I suppose," remarked the Major. "It's the last station before you get to Lefford—I noticed the name last night. I am very sorry. I should like to have seen Collinson. Tell him so, will you. I am Major Leckie."

"You will be calling again, perhaps?"

"I can't do that. I must spend the rest of this day with my friend, Sir Henry Westmorland, and I leave to-night. Tell Collinson that I embark in a few days. Stay: this is my address in London until then, if he will write to me. I wonder he did not attempt to find me out—I came home before he did: and he knew that he could always get my address at my bankers'."

"I will tell Collinson all you say, Major Leckie," said the stranger, glancing at the card. "It is a pity he is out."

"Should he come back in time—though I feel, by what you say, there's little chance of it—be so good as to say that Sir Henry Westmorland will be happy to see him to dinner this evening at Foxgrove—and to come over as much earlier as he can."

With the last words, Major Leckie left, Collinson's friend politely attending him down to the front door. I was standing at Mr. Tamlyn's gate, as he passed it on his way back to Foxgrove. Dr. Knox, then going off on foot to see a patient, came out of the surgery at the same moment.

"Such a mischance!" the major stopped in his rapid walk to say to us. "Collinson has gone to Toome to day. I saw a friend of his, who is staying with him, and he thinks he won't be back before night."

"I did not know Collinson had anybody staying with him," remarked the doctor. "Somebody called in upon him, probably."

"This man is evidently staying with him; making himself at home too," said the major. "He was in a dressing-gown and slippers, and had his feet on the fender, smoking a pipe. A tall, dark fellow, face all hair."

"Why, that is Collinson himself," cried I.

"Not a bit of it," said the major. "This man is no more like Collinson—except that Collinson is dark and has a beard—than he is like me. He said he was a stranger in the place."

A rapid conclusion crossed me that it must be a brother of Collinson's—for a resemblance to himself, according to the major's description, there no doubt was. Major Leckie wished me good day, and continued his way up the street, Dr. Knox with him.

"What are you gazing at, Johnny Ludlow?"

I turned at the question, and saw Charlotte Knox. She was coming to call on Janet. We stood there talking of one thing and another. I told Charlotte that Collinson's brother, as I took it to be, was staying with him; and Charlotte told me of a quarrel she had just had with Mina on the score of the captain.

"Mina won't believe a word against him, Johnny. When I say he is nothing but a flirt, that he is only flirting with her, she bids me hold my tongue. She quite scoffs at the notion that he would like to marry Miss Belmont."

"Have you seen any more letters, that concern me, in at Mme. St. Vincent's?" I asked.

"Do you think I should be likely to?—or that such letters are as plentiful as blackberries?" retorted Charlotte. "And you?—have you discovered the key to that letter?"

"I have not discovered it, Charlotte. I have taxed my memory in vain. Never a girl, no matter whose sister she may be, can I recal to mind as being likely to owe me a grudge."

"It was not that she owed you a grudge," quickly spoke Charlotte. "It was that she must not meet you."

"Does not the one thing imply the other? I can't think of anyone. There was a young lady indeed, in the years gone by, when I was quite a lad, who—may—have—taken up a prejudice against me," I added slowly and thoughtfully, for I was hardly sure of what I said. "But she cannot have anything to do with the present matter, and I am quite sure she was not a sister of Mme. St. Vincent."

"What was her name?" asked Charlotte.

"Sophie Chalk."

It is impossible to conclude it before next month. I am more sorry for it than you can be.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

THE CORNWALL AND DEVON COAST.

By Charles W. Wood.

A FEW days' sojourn at Ilfracombe cannot exhaust its beauties or even render them familiar to the visitor. True, it possesses not the repose and retirement of Bude or Clovelly. There you feel yourself, comparatively speaking, out of the world, unless it chances to be the full tide of the tourist epoch. At Bude during our rambles we met only two people: an antiquated pair who evidently had "trod the path of life together for many a weary mile"—and, let us hope, many a happy one also: who looked as though a course of the Droitwich baths or those of Aix might be recommended for stiffness in the joints: a penalty all must pay for the privilege of a long life. They stopped awhile on the greensward facing the sea, pretending to be rapt in the beauties of the ocean, or of distant Lundy: in reality taking stock of the newly arrived visitors, who had the honour of standing out lonely and alone in the little place. Its solitude seemed almost intruded upon by their advent. So deserted, so remote, that, like the "moping owl," it seemed to mourn this disturbance to its ancient solitary reign. After a time the antiquated couple turned and departed, evidently uneasy and uncertain in their minds; full of wonder as to whether this was the beginning of an influx of visitors about to break up their serenity, and we were the first swallows of a second summer.

Clovelly, more beautiful and romantic than Bude, was somewhat less quiet and free from visitors. There, like the stars in the sky, we could only shine by comparison, thankful to find ourselves totally eclipsed by the boisterous mirth of irrepressible youths, heard even when mercifully unseen. Perhaps we longed here for the extreme quiet of Bude, which at Bude we had not cared for—such strange, fantastic tricks does the human heart play upon mankind. It would have been so in harmony with its surroundings. True, the China shepherds and shepherdesses would have stared down upon us with a greater weight: the loves of Phyllis and Corydon, in this veritable Arcadia, would have become dolefully monotonous; but these after all were influences very much in keeping with the quaint street, the rustic cottages, the gorgeous foliage that rustled and swept in the breeze, gilded by the touch of a sunbeam that lighted up in like manner the blue transparent waters of the Bristol Channel.

Different from all this was the influence of Ilfracombe. The old-fashioned inn was exchanged for the gorgeousness and grandeur of a modern hotel—an exchange so often made at the sacrifice of the substantial realities and comforts of a more homely atmosphere.

We quickly found our way to lodgings, knowing the very house where they were to be had: and were installed. The town seemed a great place after our late stages, noisy and bustling by comparison; more full of life and activity, and thus more pleasing to certain temperaments. "I would far rather live in town than country," said Sydney Smith; "for I prefer the study of men and women to that of trees and fields." But all this depends upon the peculiar bent of the mind, the state of the nerves, the capacity and inclination for such study. The same mind, too, may be under a different influence at different seasons. "There is a time for all things;" and to the most active and energetic spirit, the change from the excitement of town life and society to a period of quiet communion with the beauties of nature, cannot be without invigorating results.

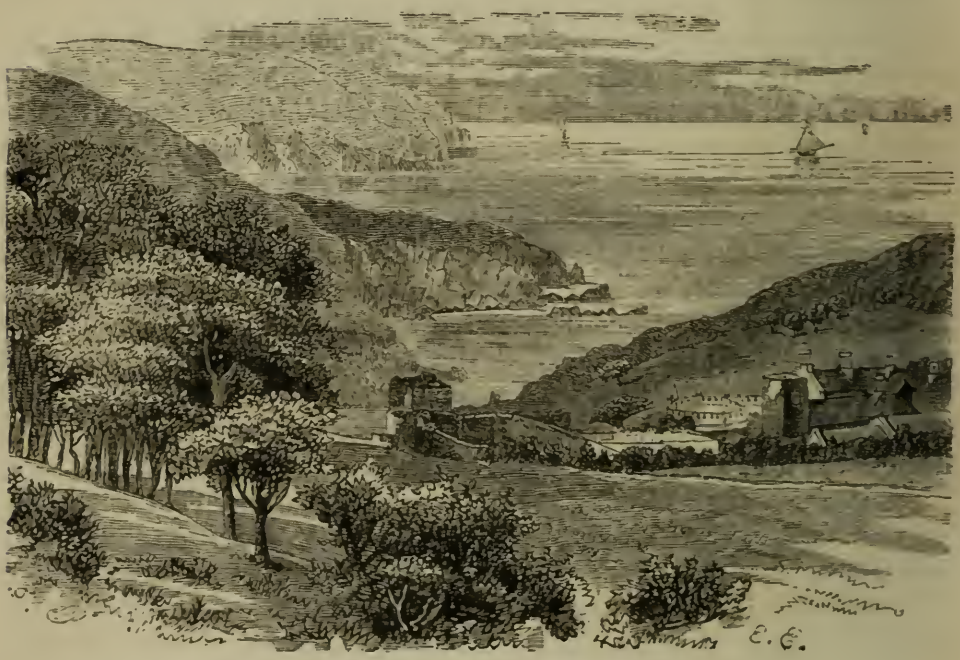
We certainly enjoyed Ilfracombe very much, and left it one fine morning with reluctance. The Clarence Inn had provided us with an excellent open carriage; the day was brilliant, the air almost balmy; and our regret at leaving Ilfracombe was tempered, it must be confessed, with the pleasurable anticipations of the drive to Lynton—a distance of twenty miles. We had heard wonders of the beauty of this drive: and were not disappointed. We quickly passed the familiar points of Watermouth Caves and Castle, the quiet, landlocked bay that seemed intended by nature for a harbour. The sea was to the left hand, and the coast stretched far in abrupt outlines and undulations, until turning more inland we left it for a while. Then came the old-fashioned village of Berrynarbor, with its antiquated toll-gate, its beautiful church and tower, and its air of humble prosperity. Beyond, lay Combe Martin, a village consisting of one long, irregular street, which seemed interminable, a church still finer than that of Berrynarbor, and a grotesque inn that has been called the Pack of Cards, from its resemblance to the "houses" children build at their play. Here we stayed a few moments, contemplating the curious and uncomfortable-looking building, whilst the horses were rested and refreshed. Then away again, up hill and down dale, through the most picturesque country roads, but occasionally the most rugged: until we suddenly turned from the highway, and entered upon the sea road to Lynton.

It is possible here, either to continue on the main-road, or to branch off, as described. In hiring a conveyance at Ilfracombe, the bargain should be made for the sea road leading through Heddon and the Valley of Rocks: otherwise, so steep and difficult is the way in many parts, that drivers as a rule avoid it and keep to the main road. Thus the great beauty of the drive is lost. Much as we had seen to admire, much to delight in, since leaving home, we had found nothing to compare with the grandeur and magnificence of the views after quitting the main road, on our way to Lynton. Our progress might be described as a series of astonished exclamations at such marvels. There are surely few scenes in the world, surely none

in England, that of their kind can rival this wonderful sea-board drive. Until it has been seen, the beauties of Devonshire must be considered unknown.

We turned off at first upon a bleak waste of common or moorland: rising ground that opened on to the sea, and seemed ready to be devoted as a prey to miners and all their black, desolating accompaniments. The coachman informed us—how far correctly we knew not—that the spot had been tried and sounded; that engineers and eager speculators had been over at different times, even so lately as within a few days, but that as yet no results had been obtained. May the results tarry long.

With a sweep round to the right, we left the barren land behind

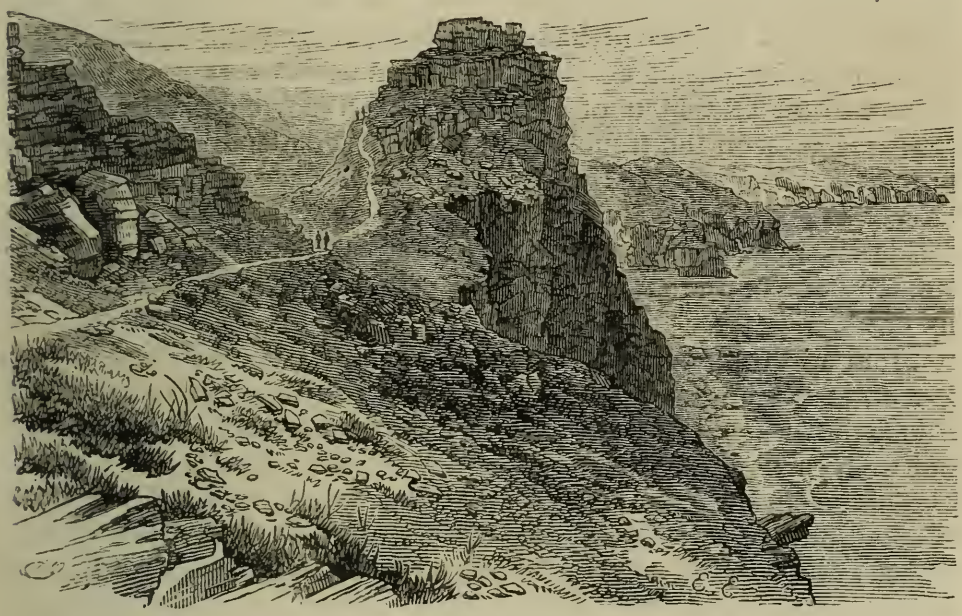


LEE BAY, NEAR LYNTON.

us, and turned into one of the most glorious, most wooded, and luxuriant spots in England. The road in many parts was only wide enough to admit the carriage. Now we swept down a rough, steep incline, a wealth of trees overarching us in a complete bower. Now passing through an old farmyard, which appeared very much like trespassing, but was not so. Now mounting a narrow hill that seemed only less difficult than the descent just gone before. Now surveying the wide waters from the hollow, and now soaring up to the heights, where a carpet of green leaves stretched in one unbroken, shimmering extent, from the giddy summit to the very edge of the shore. The coast opened up in magnificent outlines, stretching out in points and headlands, or curving in leafy bays and crescents; whilst here and there, far down on the cliff-side, in sight and sound of the eternal plash and murmur of the ocean, a space had been

cleared, and a house erected, to delight some most happy, most favoured possessor. Serene life indeed: before and around you, your familiar friends, all that is great, grand, and elevating in nature: away from the harrowing, exciting scenes of great towns: where men and women congregate, too often to show forth the weakness and inconsistencies of humanity. Remote from all this are these quiet, far-away scenes of beauty, where the pains and passions of the heart have no dwelling-place. All here should be perfect as nature herself.

We gradually made way; now halting a moment to take in more fully the beauty of some particular scene, holding our breath as we gazed: now passing Lee bay, where the coast and the trees went round in a half circle; and before us, on undulating slopes, a placid and



CASTLE ROCK, LYNTON.

beautiful object, reposed Lee Abbey, the artificial ruins near it having quite an air of romance and antiquity. Soon after, we swept into the wonderful Valley of Rocks, where perhaps our astonishment culminated.

Suddenly we had passed from the beautiful and luxuriant in nature, to the grand, the magnificent, and the barren. Not a tree was to be seen, not a shrub. An accumulation of immense piles of stone, stone upon stone, assuming the most fantastic, the most rugged forms and shapes. It was well named, indeed, the Valley of Rocks; one of the grandest specimens of rocky greatness to be seen: reminding one, somehow, of the marvellous tales of Sindbad, and the wonders of the Arabian Nights. This valley might be, should be, the abode of some enchanter. The Valley of Diamonds ought not to be far off—and, perhaps, the Valley of Bones. Here eagles should hold their parliaments, and vultures build their nests. The Old Man of

the Sea should be near at hand, and the inhabitants of the World of Magic and Enchantment disclose themselves at their revels.

Yet none of these wonders were visible: nothing but silence, solitude, and grandeur. We swept through this valley, between these gigantic masses of rock, at which we gazed with feelings akin to awe. Now they stretched in huge, unbroken surfaces on the one hand, whilst on the other the valley was broken into immense masses, peaks and boulders that confronted the sea, and disputed with it the prize for immensity and weight. It was a marvellous, almost terrific sight, an extraordinary contrast with what had so lately gone before, a transition abrupt as it was wonderful and unexpected.

The coachman pointed out some of the rocks by their names as we passed them: such as the Castle Rock, the Devil's Cheese-press, the Chimney Rock, and Rugged Jack: the latter a huge pile, surmounted by a species of natural column, rugged indeed, hard and weather-beaten, but of everlasting endurance. A sort of companion picture to the Old Man of Hoy, on the Orkney coast, that fixes its ceaseless gaze on the troubled waters of the Pentland Firth: though, formed of crumbling red sandstone, he will have disappeared and ceased to exist when Rugged Jack is yet in youthful vigour. The Castle Rock might once have been a great building petrified into stone by one of the magicians of the valley, so much did it resemble its name.

From all these wonders we passed onwards; and, mounting a steep ascent, at length found ourselves, about the hour of noon, at the Valley of Rocks Hotel: a somewhat straggling, old-fashioned building, but well-situated, comfortable, and well-conducted.

This was not to be a day of rest to us in any sense of the word. We had but the one day to devote to Lynton and its neighbourhood, whilst a week would not acquaint you with its beauties, and many weeks could never tire you of them. Therefore, after luncheon, hiring a conveyance from the inn, we again started on our travels. We were not like Dr. Syntax, "in search of the picturesque," for the picturesque lay around us, abounded and overflowed.

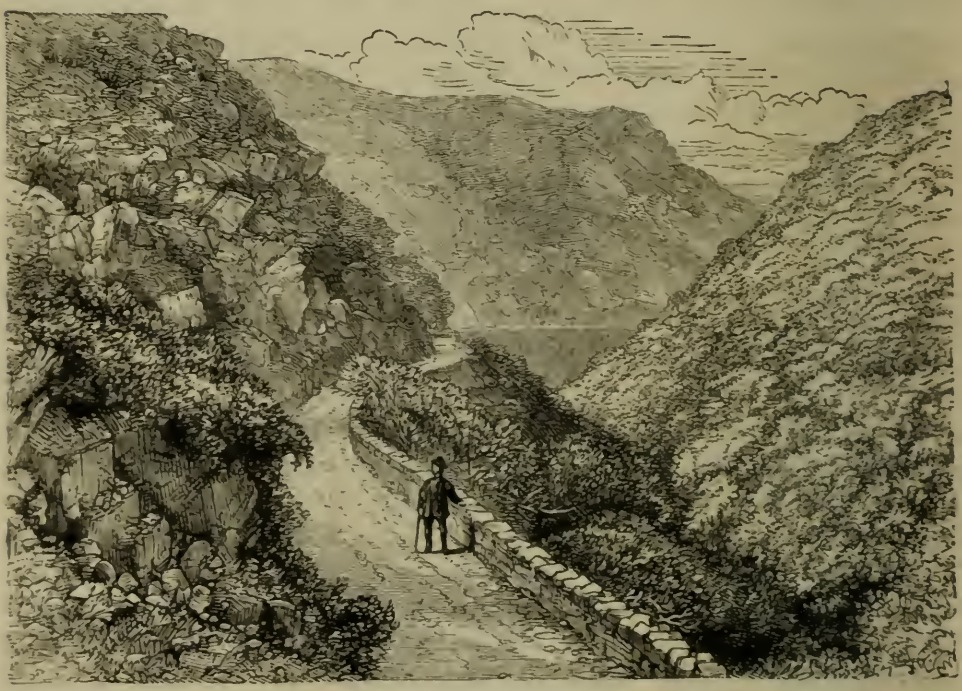
A dream of beauty is Lynton, almost fairer than any ever dreamed by poet. A precipitous descent at once led to Lynmouth, separated from Lynton only by this short winding road. Here we paused awhile to visit the grounds of Glen Lyn. Passing through the gates, we found ourselves in a fairy land of rippling streams, spanned by little rustic bridges, falling cascades, and wonderful ferns that grew in wild profusion. Over-arching trees obscured the day-light, and threw a slight sense of mystery and gloom over all, that perhaps only made beauty more beautiful; for the glen was softened to that "dim religious light" that has been found to appeal so much to the senses. The water plashed and ran in many directions, shaking the long ferns and showering them with spray. It was a lovely sheltered spot, from which one turned with reluctance.

The houses of Lynmouth were scattered about, down to the very beach, the sea almost washing some of their bases; whilst the small harbour gave refuge to a few fishing-boats lying high and dry upon the sands. Above, the magnificent heights were crowned by the houses of Lynton, certainly the pleasanter sojourn of the two places, because the more elevated. From all this we passed on to the Valley of the *East Lyn;* and once more were constrained to declare that it would be difficult to find anything to compare with it in beauty.

The Valley of the East Lyn reaches almost to the dignity of a mountain pass. Hills clothed in richest verdure rise on either side, and open out and close in as you journey. Now your progress seems to be arrested by immense slopes cleaving the valley, but suddenly the path turns and the way is cleared. A type of life: when we of little faith murmur and despair, and see around nothing but gloom and darkness, arrested progress and defeat, until suddenly there is a turn in the leaf of destiny, and by a way we knew not, we find ourselves in the haven where we would be. This gigantic mass of sloping, undulating hills, covered with such a length and breadth of trees, of which nothing is visible but the smooth level canopy of green leaves, strikes upon the beholder as one of the grandest, loveliest objects in nature. It seems full of breath and life, as the sun gilds the leaves which sway and murmur in the wind. Just now, they are yet more gorgeous with the first changing tints of autumn, mixing shades of gold with the green. Below, to the left hand, the hills slope downwards in a wild, tangled precipice, deepening as the road ascends. At the bottom runs the stream which gives its name to the valley—the East Lyn. It rushes over its narrow, stony bed, with a rapid, gurgling sound. We alight from our chariot and climb down the steep rugged path until we reach the cool rippling stream. The scene is strangely beautiful. We look upwards through wild tangles, through profusions of ferns scattered about by the rich kindly hand of nature; upwards into impenetrable gloom, where even the sun can scarcely pierce, at midsummer, its scorching rays. We follow the windings of the stream as far as Watersmeet: where the two streams blend into one, and so find their way to the sea.

A cottage is embedded in all this verdure, in the depth and gloom of the valley; surely the most desolate and retired amongst dwellings. A rustic bridge spans the stream here; we stand half-way across and the sun throws our shadows upon the water, which seems to carry them laughingly away on its bosom. Plenty of trout are in this stream, and at certain seasons we shall not find the valley as desolate and deserted as now, when we three are the sole representatives of the human race to startle the birds or frighten the fish. We have it all gloriously to ourselves: no sound to disturb the majestic solitude; majestic, indeed, for a passing visit, but appalling for a

long continuance. For a considerable distance we can trace the course of the stream, winding about like a serpent on its rough stony bed; and here anglers come: as they do to other parts of the neighbourhood, where the streams are yet more richly stocked with fish: and after many a long day will return homewards with a heavy basket, and a light heart to counterbalance, nerves and muscles refreshed and invigorated. It must be delightful to trace the whole course of the valley on foot; but our charioteer would wax impatient, and old Father Time himself does not stand still upon occasion. So we retrace our steps, almost overweighted with so much beauty and wild grandeur: we mark how some of the trees, knotted and



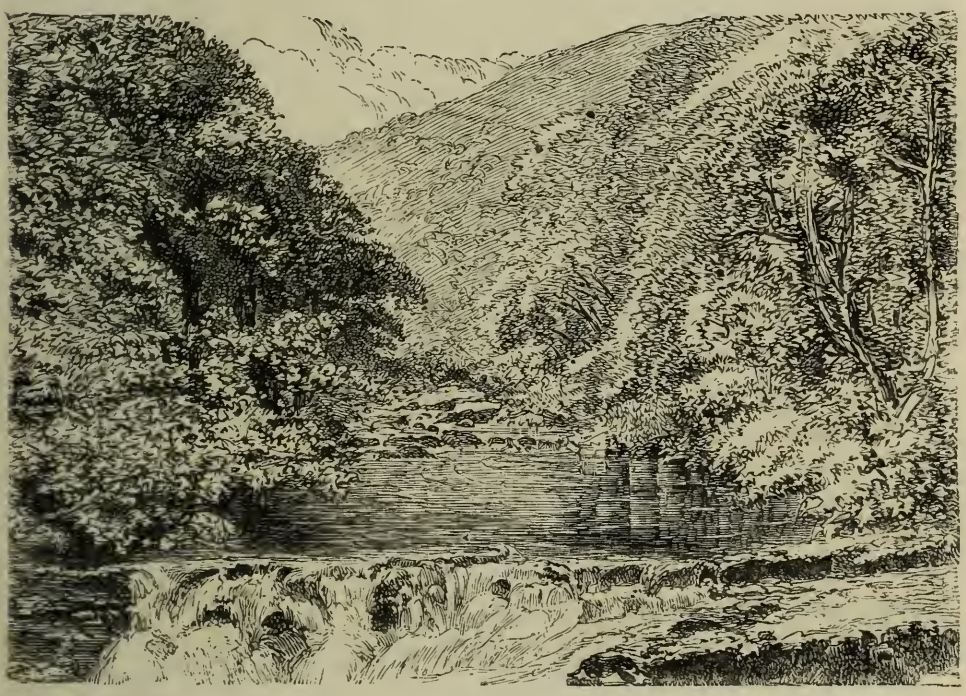
VALLEY OF THE EAST LYN.

gnarled, proclaim their antiquity; and gradually fall back again to the road.

He who cut this road through the valley conferred an amazing boon upon mankind, and should dwell in all hearts in grateful remembrance. I have never seen in England anything so much resembling the passes of the German or Tyrolese Mountains. They, of course, are grander, wilder, and more extensive; but it would be hard indeed to find anything more beautiful than this drive through the valley of the East Lyn. It is sufficiently large and open to impress the mind with an idea of magnificence; and gazing upon this amazing extent of foliage, above, around, and below, it is even difficult to take in so vast an extent of the wealth and richness of nature. In a word, it is a wonderful spot. Here the wild deer from Exmoor stray and find a refuge: and the wild stag-hunting for which Devon

and Somerset are famous, brings many a splendid animal to an untimely end. From the heights of Lyn Cliff we overlooked the gloomy ridges and wooded ravines of Exmoor, some twelve or fourteen square miles of country broken up into hills, valleys, and precipices, interspersed with mountain streams, wooded slopes, and gorse-grown commons; heather that turns brown and dead in pale autumn. The rippling water breaks the tremendous silence, accompanied sometimes by the thud of the deer startled into flight, or the crackling of wood beneath their feet.

At length we turned downwards into a rough, steep, narrow road, past an old picturesque little church, into a lane where the hedges



NEAR LYNTON.

grew high, and the blackberries large. These we picked and ate, and pricked our fingers, and stung our hands in the wayside nettles, and searched for the antidote which proved a fallacy; and altogether fancied ourselves children once more, and laughed and grew merry at each other's expense. But, instead of making the circuit and returning by the Brendon Valley, we had been so impressed by the valley of the East Lyn, that we took the same way homewards. Part of the other road we should see on the morrow, in journeying to Minehead. So, once more we had over again all our late impressions; though the valley opened out less grandly and impressively in descending. Possibly, too, our spirits were beginning to feel the accumulating and heaping together of all the grandeur, beauty, and sublimity we had gone through since early morning. As we entered the inn we agreed that nothing we had yet seen on our travels, could in

any way compare with this day's wonders. Lynton and its neighbourhood is indeed favoured, and few spots in England can challenge its surpassing beauties.

Our sitting-room at the inn faced the garden and the sea. Out through the French windows and a few steps onwards, and you came in sight of the grand cliffs, and the Valley of Rocks. That evening, when all was quiet and silent, I went out for a few moments' contemplation of the grandeur of the night. No sound was audible; the very sea, far down below, seemed silent and at rest; now and then a meteor took its rapid noiseless flight across the heavens, startling, no doubt, the eternal solitudes of space. To the left, the gigantic outlines of the cliffs and the coast could be faintly discerned. Nature, animate and inanimate, reposed: slept until the first streaks of awakening light in the East should herald the "rosy flush of morn," and bid the world uprouse itself to the battle of another day. But amidst such scenes battle and strife must die a speedy death and sink out of all knowledge.

The next morning we took an early walk by the sea coast, climbed the rugged steps of the Castle rock, and from this vantage-ground surveyed all the surrounding wonders. Not less magnificent and imposing than yesterday was the Valley of Rocks, down which the eye swept with such pleasure and admiration, its very grandeur imparting a feeling of sublimity to the mind that no visible object tended to diminish. As grand and yet more suggestive of boundless expanse, were the clear blue waters, with their restless, unceasing surging. Lynmouth reposed below to the right, amid its verdure and its wild bowers. Here the Lyn yielded up its expiring life to the Channel, after running its course through some of the loveliest, wildest scenery imaginable: scenery of every description, from the fernclad banks of the East Lyn valley to the gloomy depths of Exmoor.

It was almost with sad feelings that we left Lynton that day, and entered upon our last drive—another stage of twenty miles, terminating at Minehead. From thence the road must give place to the rail, or home could not be seen at the appointed day and hour. Passing down the steep hill to Lynmouth, and quickly leaving the houses and cottages of this favoured spot, we swept up the valley of Brendon, and pursued our way by the sea coast. Here the ridges of Exmoor, clothed with rich verdure presented their bold, towering fronts to the sea. To the right, Exmoor opened out its vast extent, its wooded, rugged valleys, its level plains. For the first time since we had left home the sun hid his face; thick dark clouds gathered threateningly, and threw their gloom and solemnity over this great tract of wild country, portentous even at its brightest. A sharp wind took the place of the balmy air which had hitherto accompanied us on our travels, and swept up the valleys and over the heights with cruel, cutting force; yet less unkind, says Shakespeare, than man's ingratitude. It was well, perhaps, to have this change for a short time, in

order that we might, if possible, more fully appreciate the fair weather that had gone before. The solemn gloom cast over Exmoor by the dark clouds had also so grand an effect, was so much in harmony with the wild depths of scenery, that it impressed itself upon the mind as the most fitting colouring that could be found. Certainly it produced a lasting and indelible impression. We passed onwards with rapidity, glad to leave these black heights, and presently commence the steep descent to Porlock.

Here again we found one of the loveliest spots imaginable. On either side the road the red banks of earth, crowned by hedges that in summer are picturesque with creepers and wild flowers, threw a warmth and cheerfulness over the whole landscape; a splendid bit of colouring in the foreground, toned and relieved by the waving trees that grew in forests on the hill sides, sloping, undulating, curving into laughing valleys, rich and cultivated, a very paradise of earth. Between these red banks, which grew high and higher as we descended the hard steep road, we gradually made way, until we entered the village of Porlock, and stopped at the primitive old inn, which gives rest and shelter to man and beast.

The shelter was of the humblest. The sitting-room was occupied by a gentleman, who in the most kindly manner took pity upon the travellers and vacated his apartment for a short season. We feasted sumptuously upon bread-and-cheese, country butter, and excellent ale; the only fare the inn could furnish; humble, but grateful to hungry people, and refined and made delicate by the hospitable civility of the hostess, who thus endeavoured to atone for the deficiencies of her larder. I should be afraid to state how moderate was the charge for this banquet, lest it should cause a run upon the house and ruin its rustic simplicity.

We were only a little more than half way to Minehead, and soon started again on our journey. The road henceforth was of a somewhat different character. We passed through quiet sleeping villages, where roses and woodbine grow over the cottages; past smiling, fruit-laden orchards, and green meadows, and cultivated lands; where lately the golden waves of corn had been cut down, and stubble had given shelter all too perilous to the partridge, and harvest hymns had echoed over hills and vales, rising from groups of men and women as twilight gathered at the harvest home: or issued on the quiet Sunday from the small church of some secluded hamlet. At length, about four o'clock, we reached Minehead, and our day's journey was at an end.

A tame, quiet little place, with a picturesque miniature harbour in the midst of much lovely surrounding scenery; but little in the place itself to attract the visitor, or to cause him to prolong his sojourn: unless he makes it his head-quarters for the stag-hunting season. As stag-hunting was not our present object, we were not sorry to leave the next morning, by an early train, for the ancient city of

Exeter. We were now going over well-known ground, and felt that our journey was virtually ended.

We passed rapidly through the beauties of Dunster; beauties that refuse to be appreciated by a hasty glance from a railway train, but must be wooed and intimately courted. Dunkery, the highest of the Exmoor range of hills, did not wear his cap, the absence of which betokened fair weather. At Taunton we changed for Exeter, and

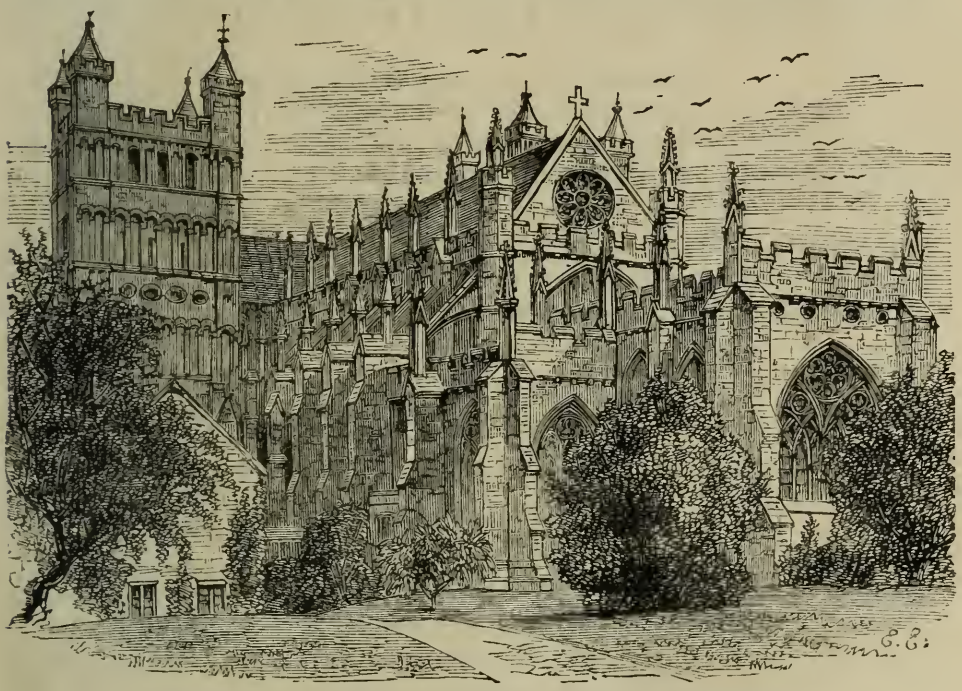
EXETER CATHEDRAL, INTERIOR.

reached the famous Cathedral city about four o'clock in the afternoon. Here we stayed quietly the next day, receiving less pleasure from the noisy streets than we had gained from the wonders of nature we had gone through. The Cathedral was under repair, and could only be seen at a disadvantage; service for the time had been discontinued; but here, if for no other reason, is a grand inducement for visiting Exeter. The magnificence of the west front, the grandeur of the interior with its symmetrical and uniform proportions, the expansive nave, the lofty aisles, the exquisite fluted pillars, with their pointed arches, the beauty of the carving in the chancel, the groined

roof, lofty and unbroken throughout its extent, the richness of its decorative style; all contribute to the great beauty and interest of Exeter Cathedral.

Spending one whole day in Exeter, as much for rest as for anything else, we entered the following morning upon the last stage of our journey.

The great beauty of the line between Exeter and Plymouth is as well known as it is unrivalled. To this point the journey was rapid and pleasant; but from Plymouth to Falmouth, nothing can exceed the slow tediousness of the trains. An express on this line is unknown, or even a moderately quick train. Starting from London, the comparatively short journey from Plymouth to Falmouth seems in-



EXETER CATHEDRAL, EAST END AND SOUTH TOWER.

finitely longer and more tiring than the previous and very much longer portion. It could scarcely fail to be to the Company's advantage to put on at least one fast train in the day from Plymouth to Falmouth, corresponding with the "Flying Dutchman," which leaves Paddington at 11·45, and reaches Plymouth—a distance of 247 miles—at 6 o'clock. The slowness of the journey from this point undoubtedly prevents many a short visit from being made to Falmouth.

Nevertheless we got there at last, when the evening had grown apace, and darkness had fallen upon the world. And here, reader, having started from the picturesque old town, and safely landed you within the shadow of Pendennis, we will part company. These few pages have by no means exhausted the beauties of Cornwall and Devon, or even given them in detail. They have merely sketched

in rapid outline a fortnight's drive through scenes that must give the greatest pleasure, the most exquisite delight, to the lover of nature: scenes so grand, so varied, at times so sublime, that the mind when gazing upon them cannot fail to be elevated, and rise in wonder to the contemplation of that Power that has brought all these marvels into existence, unchanging and unchanged as in the days of their creation. It is possible that some, to whom the neighbourhood is unknown, reading these lines and finding themselves near at hand, may tread in our footsteps, and realize for themselves wonders that can only be faintly seen in description. They will indeed have their reward.

So, reader, as we enter Falmouth in darkness, let our parting word be "Good-night." Or let us change it for Shelley's better thought:

"Good-night? Ah! no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be *good* night."

RAINDROPS.

At noon to-day the tempest raged,
Earth felt his tears upon her breast;
Fierce war awhile the giant waged,
Then sobbing sank again to rest.

The cloud is gone, and nothing now
Recalls the fury of the hour,
But raindrops hanging on the bough,
Sole token of the passing shower.

A hundred dancing in the sun,
A hundred more in shadow found;
Each falling, falling, one by one,
To sink forgotten in the ground.

Pure pearls that tranquil shine, and then
Are stirred and shaken by the breeze:
Methinks the troublous lives of men
May well be likened unto these.

Ah, little drops of trembling mould,
Brief lives, to death so swift a prey,
Which first shall quit its slender hold,
Which soonest perish—who can say?

SIDNEY GREY.

THE WOUNDED HAND.

From a German Detective's Note Book.

ON the 22nd of May, 1875, I stood in our office, behind my desk, when our chief entered the room with a letter in his hand, and addressed me with an invitation to undertake the unravelling of a mystery which had baffled the local police at T. I consented, and departed for the scene of the crime which had been committed, much limited, however, as to the time I was allowed for spending on the case.

Two hundred and fifty-five thousand marks had been stolen from the widow of a well-connected man named Friedow. Her villa stood outside the gates of a small town, and the lost property consisted chiefly in coupons and such value, together with a little coin. Her habit was to keep all papers of importance, as well as money, in a chest of drawers beside her bed. Her sleeping room was situated on the first floor, and had but one window, which looked out upon the yard. Her confidential friends had often advised Frau Friedow to keep her gold at least in some safer place, but she had always resisted such counsel, and put no faith in banks or bankers. As to a safe! she had averred that if robbers did ever molest her, unless her trusty dog and her faithful Frederick, who was her factotum and the only male person upon her little property, could protect her, an iron box would avail little beyond, perhaps, delaying the thieves in laying hold of what they wanted.

On the night of the 7th of May the poor lady was suddenly awakened about twelve o'clock. Her room was illuminated. Before her bed stood a small thin man, with a lanthorn in his left hand and a hatchet in his right.

In a rough, disguised voice he threatened to knock out her brains if she so much as ventured to utter a sound. The unfortunate Frau was already voiceless from alarm. This speech could scarcely make her more quiet, but she could use her eyes, and did so for the next few seconds while her visitors remained with her. She saw that the speaker wore black hose, a blue blouse, and a mask; and that two more men were busy in the background, breaking open her chest of drawers. In the farthest back division, covered over by stockings, yarn, and flax, lay a round tin case, in which she kept her movable treasures. She was just recovering herself sufficiently to begin thinking about risking her life by calling for help, when the smothered yelling of a dog was heard without. The thieves had found what they wanted, however, and sprang with it to the window, one sash of which was open. They threw themselves upon a ladder

without, and descended to the ground, while the third man still kept guard beside the bed. Frau Friedow cried "Help! Help!" with all her might. "You may scream as long as you like now," he muttered, turning away, and following the others from the room.

Frederick appeared at this instant, having been awakened by the noise. He found the ladder still in its place, and below, was just in time to save the life of the house-dog, which had been almost choked by a cord twisted round his neck fastening him to his kennel. The manservant roused up the neighbours, but all pursuit, then or later, by friends privately or by the police publicly, had been in vain. Not the least clue had hitherto been obtained as to the identity of the housebreakers.

This was how the matter stood when I arrived at T. When I had privately communicated with the magistrates, my second visit was naturally paid to Frau Friedow. I sought everywhere for any special indications which might put me on the right track, but what I found was desperately little. Like those who had gone before me I concluded that the robbery had, at any rate, been accomplished by persons well acquainted with the locality, as entrance to the premises had been made by a small door in the yard, of the very existence of which many of the neighbours were unaware. The ladder made use of had been dragged out of a nook in which it had long lain concealed. A pane of glass had been smashed in the window of the bedroom to enable one of the assailants to slip back the bolt. A few footprints had been traced, but there was nothing remarkable about their appearance, and they had been lost at once upon the high road or street upon which the little courtyard opened.

One thing seemed alone certain amid the maze of perplexity; the housebreakers must be sought from amongst neighbours, servants, friends, or relations. Now the neighbour theory, upon investigation, seemed utterly futile, and one glance at old Frederick was enough to make one dismiss all thoughts connected with the second term in the list. There remained the friends and relations in the habit of visiting at the villa. The widow had not the faintest suspicion of foul play in any of these; nevertheless I made her describe and closely particularise them all to me. I took up half-a-dozen imaginary scents: I ran hither and thither. I telegraphed in various directions. I worked, in fact, in the sweat of my brow; but, alas! the result was simply nothing, nothing, nothing. I never before had been so utterly puzzled and hopelessly at fault.

On the fourth day of my residence at T. I went again to the villa, where the widow greeted me with eyes full of expectation. "Frau Friedow," I said, "it seems to me hardly possible that you are utterly without suspicion in every quarter. There must surely be some one or other on whom your mind has fixed, if it were but for a second. Confess it is so, and confide in me."

"I assure you I have not even a shadowy thought such as you describe," she replied, in a much disappointed tone.

"And has nothing more struck you about those men you saw in your room than you have already mentioned? One remembers things on due consideration which have been often overlooked before. Did you notice no peculiarity about any of the scoundrels: in the voice, for instance, the way of standing, the hands of him who held the axe? Had he on a ring? Did he look rough, like the others?"

"There was one little thing I may not have told before," she replied, slowly. "It was scarce worth telling. When the two fellows ran off down the ladder with my little case, the window slapped down as they disappeared. The third man pushed it up again to go after them, but in so doing I think he must have put his hand through the broken pane, and have hurt it with the glass, in his haste. I certainly heard him mutter to himself, as if he were in distress."

"Was there no trace of blood left?" I asked, anxiously.

"None whatever."

I began my investigations anew, and this time with the doctor of the district. We got into a lively dissertation upon wounded hands, and in particular upon hurts inflicted by glass. By degrees I acquired the, to me, very interesting fact that some three weeks since, when the medico was riding home to breakfast after an early call, a strange man had suddenly appeared in the middle of the highway, and had implored his help. He complained of having fallen upon a heap of broken glass, and held out his right hand to exhibit its condition. The doctor took out his pocket case of instruments, and extracted five splinters from the inflamed palm. While he did so the patient whimpered like a woman.

"How was the fellow dressed?" I cried, breathlessly.

"A blue blouse and black underclothes, so far as I can recall."

"Could you identify him again?"

"Perhaps. His face made an impression on me, rather; because it did not seem to match the clothing, and yet, now I think of it, I seem to see only an ordinary brow, nose, and mouth. I fancy it was the set of the head on the shoulders which looked remarkable. Artisans and such folk usually look otherwise. That is all I can say. But what makes this matter interesting to you?"

"I believe your complaining patient to be the principal in the late robbery, concerning which I have come down here," I replied in a low voice. "Can you give me any idea as to what became of the man, after you were done with him?"

The doctor looked at me in amazement. "I think he went towards Ems," he replied.

I lost no time in going in the same direction. An old tree, which forked at the top, and carried a bell in that division, stood

on a height near the shore. Here those who wanted to be ferried over the river must stop and ring for the boatman, whose house stood in a sheltered nook at hand. I shirked preliminaries, and made at once for the dwelling. Here I found a gigantic person, who declared herself the daughter of the ferry-man, and the customary rower when, as now, her father was absent. I sought to gain the confidence of this damsel. "A friend of mine went over here, I think, not long since," I said. "He was in great haste, being on his way to Holland, in order to escape serving here in the army."

The popular antipathy to the enforced military training loosed her tongue at once. "Yes! yes!" she replied. "A young man in great haste did surely go over a little time back."

"He wore a blue blouse and black hose?"

"Maybe; but it seems to me he had others with him, or of his party."

"Very probably. Two others, I suppose?"

"This was how it was. One man came to me in the early dawning. I put him across. An hour or so later there came a second, and asked anxiously about the first. When I told him he was beyond he seemed content enough, and followed. The third, your friend with the blouse, asked if he were the first who had wanted me that day. He asked me particularly about the two I had already rowed over, and then seemed right gay, and jumped into the boat himself."

"Ah! One of the three carried a tin box?" I said, slipping a coin into my new acquaintance's palm.

"I never noticed," answered the girl. "But I saw that the third man carried a round bundle or parcel wrapped in a red handkerchief under his arm."

"Did he give you a good reward for taking him over?"

"Nothing more than all the world—ten pfennigs."

"With his right hand?"

"Why not?"

"Wasn't his right hand tied up?"

"Not that I saw. I only know he kept one hand in his pocket, whether the right or left I couldn't say now."

I could have embraced the tall ferry-woman, in spite of her forty summers and her uncertainty upon minor points. It was plain that the three ruffians, for better security, had separated, and that the last comer was the leader in and the chief benefiter by the crime which had been committed. During his confab with the doctor no doubt he had hidden the spoils in some hedge. I was upon his track now.

But I had soon to cry "lost!" It was a grievous disappointment to me. Beyond Ems the clue was nowhere to be followed. I laboured in vain in this neighbourhood for days. I made friends

with all sorts of people, letter-carriers, porters, waiters, and walked many a weary mile in the hot sun, but all to no purpose. I was baffled and wholly at fault, as much as though I never had had a hint at all to follow.

Nine days had gone by since I had come to T. I turned into a beer-garden in the neighbourhood of the town one evening, and sat down near a well-lighted bowling-alley, in which about ten gentlemen were busy at a game. My seat was rather in the shade. I paid little attention to the players, but leaned my head upon my hand, and reviewed the defeat I had sustained, and the small estimation in which I should be held for sake of it by my colleagues and chief at home; feeling altogether extremely out of humour. Suddenly an ill-thrown ball rolled almost to my feet.

"A miss—a miss," shouted several voices together, while one cried: "Why, Bottcher, is your hand not even yet recovered? You are not complaining of it still?" I felt like a huntsman in a forest who sees the game at his gun's end. I was on the alert that second. I lost no time in finding out all Herr Bottcher's antecedents. He was a merchant, one of Frau Friedow's connections, and an occasional visitor at her house. He was a continual guest at this place of entertainment. I brought the doctor here next evening, and set him to work stealthily considering my game. My discomfiture was great when he flatly refused to identify Herr Bottcher and his patient as one and the same person. They might be one, he confessed: but then —— they might not.

If the medico turned rusty, like this, it seemed to me utterly useless to bring hither the ferry-woman on a like errand. I must trust to myself alone. We officials have two methods of doing business of this sort. We use the long or short line, according as either seems most likely to suit. I determined to try one after the other. In order to put Bottcher quite off the scent, I went now to the host of this house of entertainment, and introduced myself to him as a Hamburg agent for the forbidden lotteries. I begged him to keep this close, but I saw, very plainly by his face, that he intended doing nothing of the sort. Next morning, to my great contentment, I found myself outwardly under the supervision of the town police, and generally regarded by the public as a shabby individual.

I, meantime, was as busy as ever, but it was little I discovered. Herr Bottcher was certainly not in good repute amongst his fellows. Nevertheless, I could hear of no particular difficulty into which he had fallen of late: although I did learn that he had, three weeks since, made a hasty journey. One little fact, however, seemed to me of great worth. Herr Bottcher these times slept badly, and was wont to rise often by night, and pace up and down through the garden.

I lay lurking for two entire nights under bushes in this same plot; but during all those weary hours whoever *did* come to this place Herr Bottcher unfortunately did *not*, and in the garden I could find

no trace of any hidden treasure, or likelihood of such. I fell into greater despair than before. What could I do? Upon one side my absolute certainty of having tracked my man. On the other, no earthly means of bringing home his guilt. If I only had even sufficient ground to demand a search through the rascal's house! but I had not. One afternoon I was walking up and down my room considering, when the post brought me a brief but concise and decisive despatch from my chief. "Return immediately, unless all matters are in train. Give up. Your presence here is necessary."

This order was like a thunderclap in my ears. My commanding officer was plainly displeased at my long delay. Should I simply throw the cards down or venture all on one trick this same evening, so as to be ready to depart to-morrow, at furthest? I decided for the last alternative.

Twelve gentlemen sat in the town club-room. My friend made one of them. To his great surprise I sat down close to him, and began to talk a little. Presently our nearest neighbour stood up and departed, to my great joy. I bent over to Bottcher now, and whispered that I had a weighty matter to talk over with him.

"What may it be?" he enquired, calmly.

"You believe I am here as a lottery agent?"

He nodded.

"I am not, however. I have been sent here on detective business, by the Prussian Police Office." Herr Bottcher took this revelation significantly. On the instant he knew not how to compose his features. He first drew in his face as if wishing to look astonished, and then he tried to smooth away all but supreme indifference. After a second or two, during which I had studied him as a serpent does its prey, he said in a constrained tone:

"How does that concern me, pray, good sir?"

"You have heard of a widow Friedow, from whom a large sum of money has been stolen. I have come here to hunt up the thief. I have got on the right track. You, I know, are related to her, and concerned in the property she possesses as a probable heir."

While I spoke thus I looked him straight into the eyes. They sparkled like those of an angry cat making ready to spring.

"And you will arrest me, I suppose?" he gasped angrily.

I should have loved to seize him by the throat then and there, shouting, "In the name of the law." To this day I wonder how I restrained myself, but I did.

"How can you talk so!" I exclaimed, calmly. "I only mean that you must help me to bring the criminal to justice; being, as you are, interested in the inheritance."

"With all the pleasure in life," he replied, heartily. "I will do what I can. But—what is it you want of me?"

"Early to-morrow I will come to you to consult over the matter, and we can then decide on our proceedings."

Bottcher drew a long breath. "This is most unfortunate," he exclaimed. "I have had an urgent summons, and must start from T. before daybreak. Perhaps I may even be obliged to leave this evening. I owe a heavy sum of money, and must appear personally to my creditor to demand further delay. I cannot wait." I could scarce restrain my joy. The game had run his head right into my lasso; only one pull now, and the knot was fast.

"Don't trouble," I said, quietly. "By-and-by will do for me. I shall be in T. for another week: when you come back will answer as well."

"All right: I expect to return in a couple of days," he exclaimed. "But stay, one question! Is Dr. Miding mixed up in this affair?"

"Do you know him?"

"By sight only."

"He will help me to identify the criminal," I said, coolly looking full again into my companion's face, which took a horrible tint and expression now.

"Can he do so?"

"Certainly. He saw the man, dressed like a labourer, the morning after the robbery was effected."

"Who was this ruffian?" Bottcher asked, breathlessly.

"His name is—Ebbing—I think," I answered, at haphazard.

"I don't know him," was the reply to this.

"I daresay," I said; "he only comes here at times." I rose now, broke off our conversation with every appearance of confidence, and departed, having shaken Bottcher by the hand. I went stealthily to his house and waited. I had been here but about a quarter of an hour when a trap dashed up to the door. Bottcher sprang out of it, went inside for a few minutes, and then reappeared carrying something under his left arm. As he got upon one side of the vehicle, I jumped upon the other, and seized hold of my game. He made not the least resistance, but sat like one enchanted.

"Are those Frau Friedow's papers you have under your arm?" I enquired.

"Yes, they are," he replied.

I made the coachman take us where I could put the robber in safe keeping.

When a man is suddenly discovered in a crime, he is sure to commit some piece of folly. I had reckoned upon this, and was not out in so doing. My game had literally walked into my hand, and I felt rewarded at last for all my trouble and disappointing delays.

Bottcher was sentenced to six years in the House of Correction. His coadjutors were not caught.

NARISSA ROSAVO.

ONE AUTUMN NIGHT.

By M. E. Penn.

THERE is no pleasanter spot in leafy Warwickshire than Clieveden Vale. The little "Clieve"—scarcely more than a stream, though it calls itself a river—meanders through the valley in a loitering, leisurely fashion, now winding through pastoral meadows, now making a detour to cross the main street of a straggling village, where it is spanned by an ivy-covered bridge; then flowing onwards into the green shady solitude of Clieveden woods.

On the slope of the valley, its Tudor chimneys just visible above the trees, stands the Hall, the residence of Sir Richard Clieveden; and on the opposite hill side, with woods and stream between, is the Vicarage—a handsome modern house, surrounded by smooth lawns and bright parterres. The baronet has two sons. Gilbert, the heir, lives quietly at home, dividing his time pretty equally between sport and study; his younger brother, Reginald, who is in the army, seldom makes his appearance at the Hall. "The Captain only comes when he wants money," say the household; and it must be acknowledged that after one of his duty-visits Sir Richard generally finds his purse lightened. Again and again the old gentleman has vowed that he would "draw a line," and pay no more of Reginald's debts; but the line is not yet drawn, for in spite of his faults the scapegrace younger son is the father's favourite.

There is constant and friendly intercourse between the inmates of the Hall and the Vicarage. The Reverend Edgar Severne, though only "a country parson," is a man of good birth and ample means. He has been twice married. His second wife, the present Mrs. Severne, was an heiress, and her fortune will descend to their daughter, Maud.

It is Maud Severne who, on this September evening, stands at the open French window of the drawing-room, looking out over the lawn, the river, and the woods, towards the chimneys of Clieveden Hall.

The fading glow of the sunset lights her face; a face which, like her character, is faulty enough, if critically examined, but thoroughly lovable and attractive nevertheless, with its bright "April-blue" eyes, equally ready for smiles or tears, its pretty wilful lips, and exquisite complexion.

Maud had been standing for some moments, deep in thought—rather graver thought than usual, to judge from her face—when her mother's voice roused her.

"Maud," said Mrs. Severne, looking up from her writing-table at the other end of the room, "did Reginald Clieveden call this morning while I was out?"

"Yes, mother; at least, he did not come in. I was in the garden, and he practised lawn-tennis with me."

Her mother's brow contracted as she closed and addressed the letter she had just finished.

"If Reginald must devote all his energies to lawn-tennis, I wish that he would practise at home instead of spending all his mornings here. I do not care for him to be constantly in your society, particularly during Gilbert's absence. However, his leave will soon expire, I suppose, and then ——"

"I don't see what Gilbert has to do with it," Maud interrupted, a shade of defiance in her tone.

"Don't you think Gilbert has a right to object to your flirting with his brother when you are engaged to himself?" was the quiet enquiry.

"But, excuse me, mother, I am not engaged to Gilbert," she returned, coming away from the window. "A month ago, just before he started on his Highland tour, he proposed to me, but I would not give him an answer then; I told him I did not know my own mind—and it was true."

"But previously to that you had given him sufficient encouragement to justify his thinking that you meant to accept him eventually. He takes it for granted that you will."

"He takes it for granted—yes, that is just what I complain of," Maud declared. "He knows that you and papa are on his side, and he thinks my consent 'goes without saying.' But I don't care to be disposed of in that summary manner."

"That is a very unjust and unkind remark," was Mrs. Severne's comment. "You know perfectly well that your father and I would never attempt to force your inclinations; if we wish to see you Gilbert's wife, it is because we are sure that he would make you happy. He is a loyal, true-hearted gentleman; a man whose love any woman might be proud to win."

Maud was silent a moment.

"Yes, that is quite true," she said at last. "Gilbert is all that is noble and good—almost too good. If he were a little faulty I think I should like him better. He lives in an atmosphere too rarefied for common mortals to breathe."

Mrs. Severne glanced at her with displeasure.

"I am sorry to hear you sneer at Gilbert."

"Indeed, mother, I am not sneering. I have the greatest respect and affection for him, only—only ——"

"Only he has not Reginald's handsome face and flattering tongue," her mother concluded. "Ah, Maud, take care that you do not throw away the substance for the shadow, and find out your mistake when it is too late."

The girl made no reply, but her face clouded with a doubtful, anxious look, as if her mother's warning had given expression to some unacknowledged misgiving in the recesses of her own mind.

She returned to her old place at the window, and after standing there irresolutely a few moments, passed out on to the lawn.

Twilight's "gradual dusky veil" was deepening over woods and fields, and a pale half-moon gleamed faintly in the darkening sky. In the dim light the flowers in the garden-beds looked pale and unreal, like the ghosts of departed blossoms.

Maud crossed the sloping lawn at the side of the house, descended a steep path which led down through the plantation to the river, and paused by a rustic bridge, connecting the Vicarage grounds with those of the Hall. Just above the bridge a little waterfall came dancing down out of the wood to join the river; a few yards lower the stream widened into a miniature lake, whose unruffled surface reflected like a mirror the woods and sky. Close to the margin of the pool stood a picturesque rustic pavilion, called the Châlet, built from a design by Gilbert Clieveden, who spent much of his time there in the summer. The upper room, which overhung the water, and was supported on piles, was his study; the space beneath was used as a boat-house. The baronet's eldest son was not only a clever amateur artist, he had made his mark in literature, and was a contributor to several high-class Reviews and scientific journals. A thoughtful, studious, scholarly man; as great a contrast as could be imagined to his brother Reginald, with his frank contempt for intellectual pursuits, his shallow mind, and fickle heart.

Maud leaned against the rail of the bridge, looking towards the opposite bank. The shadows had gathered thickly under the trees, but the rising moon cast a long, tremulous line of light across the lake. At this shadowy silent hour the place was mournful in its utter solitude.

Presently from Clieveden woods came the sound of a musical tenor voice, singing, "Come into the garden, Maud," and in a few moments the singer, Reginald Clieveden, emerged from the shadow of the trees, and crossed the bridge to her side.

"'She is come—my dove, my dear!'" he quoted, as he kissed her hand.

"I should not have come," Maud hastened to assure him, "only I had something particular to say to you."

"Something pleasant, I hope? If not, let it wait. I have just passed a mauvais quart d'heure with my father, and I want you to smooth my ruffled feelings, and pour balm on my wounded spirit."

"Oh, Reginald, are you in disgrace again?"

"Even so. And pretty deep in it too. The pater swears he will have nothing more to do with me. He has 'drawn a line,' at last."

"But you know he always says that," Maud reminded him, consolingly.

"He always says it, but this time he appears to mean it," her companion returned, with a significant nod, pulling his moustache.

"You don't mean that he refuses to help you!" she exclaimed.

"Positively—except on one condition, and that"—he paused, still thoughtfully caressing his moustache. "Such an easy way out of the difficulty, if I dared," he muttered.

"What is it?" she enquired, but he made no reply.

"If Sir Richard does not relent, what in the world shall you do?" asked Maud, after a pause.

He shrugged his shoulders. "How do I know? I can't look so far into the infinities. The true philosophy is to take short views of life. Let us change the subject. What was it you had to say to me?"

She hesitated.

"I was going to ask you," she began, "not to come quite so often to the Vicarage—at any rate, for the present; my mother does not approve of it; at least, she thinks Gilbert would not. She says that I am treating him unfairly, and—and I am afraid she is right."

"That depends. If you are engaged to him ——"

"But I am not; at least ——"

"Then I fail to see what right he has to control you, or why you need banish me, to gratify him. It is me you are treating unfairly—cruelly, Maud, knowing what I feel for you."

"If—if I were sure you cared for me ——"

"You must be blind if you doubt it. 'Care for you'—what a feeble little phrase! I love you as I never loved in my life; and you know it."

"You never told me so till this moment," she murmured, plucking a handful of leaves from a bush near, and dropping them one by one into the stream.

His face darkened suddenly.

"The words have been on my lips a hundred times within the last three weeks, but a scruple kept me silent. Don't ask me what it was; it is connected with an episode in my life that I hate to think of."

He bent his handsome head to hers, looking into her face with that dangerous tender gaze which few women could resist.

"Speak to me," he pleaded; "say one word, or if the word won't come, put your hand in mine. I shall understand."

Flattered, touched, thrilled by his ardent look, carried away by his earnest pleading, the girl silently placed her hand in his.

There was an expression of triumph and relief, touched by a certain vague remorse, on the young man's face, as he lifted the little hand to his lips.

"Now that you are quite sure that I 'care for you' just a little, you won't talk of banishing me, will you?" he said presently. "Tell Mrs. Severne that if anyone is sent to Coventry it must be Gilbert."

"Poor Gilbert!" Maud sighed, penitently. "I wonder what he will think of me when he learns ——"

"Ah yes, I shall be curious to see how he takes it," Reginald

answered, equably, examining a ring on her finger. "He never dreamt of me as a possible rival; I must look out for squalls."

She looked uneasy.

"I hope there will be no quarrel between you," she said, anxiously; "I should never forgive myself, if ——"

"If there is it will be of his making," Reginald interrupted; "but I should think he has enough wisdom to take his defeat quietly. By-the-by, have you heard from him since he left home?"

"Yes; he wrote last week from a place called Glenfalloch, where ——"

"Glenfalloch!" he repeated in a startled tone; "are you sure that was the name?"

"Quite sure. It is in the Western Highlands. Do you know it?"

There was a pause before the answer came. His face had a blank, dismayed look, and the colour had left his lips.

"I—I have heard of it," he said, at length, looking away from her. "Well," he continued, after a moment, making an effort to resume his usual manner, "to return to ourselves. When may I speak to the Vicar?"

"Papa is going to Leamington to-morrow, to take Mr. R——'s duties for a fortnight."

"Then, Maud, I will see him this evening; at once. I want it to be all safely settled before Gilbert appears on the scene. Are you coming in now?"

"Not with you. In a few moments."

"Gilbert at Glenfalloch!" muttered Reginald, as he ascended the path; "it looks like fatality, and if I were superstitious—bah! after all, nothing may come of it; at any rate, I shall not throw up the cards till the game is lost. Après cela, le déluge!"

Very grave grew Maud's face when she was alone. Doubts and misgivings crowded into her mind, and would not be dismissed. Her mother's warning haunted her: "Take care that you do not throw away the substance for the shadow."

Had she really done so, and would she live to repent her rashness? It seemed to her that she was beginning to repent it already. She thought of Gilbert as she never had before, tenderly, regretfully, with a remorseful consciousness of his worth; with a tardy appreciation of the value of that faithful heart which she had flung aside so lightly.

She tried to assure herself that he would soon recover from the disappointment, and return to the old brotherly intercourse, but she knew his nature too well to believe that he could so easily forget. She remembered his words, spoken on that very spot, a month ago: "I have loved you all your life, and whether you accept me or not I shall love you still."

Absorbed in her reflections she did not hear an approaching footstep, or notice the figure of a man advancing along the path which skirted the stream, on the opposite bank. On seeing her he paused,

looked at her doubtfully a moment, then came quickly across the bridge to her side; and Maud, raising her head, saw before her the very person who had been in her thoughts—Gilbert Clieveden.

She drew back with a stifled cry.

"Don't be alarmed. It is I—Gilbert," he said, in his pleasant cordial tones, taking her hand in both his own. "Did I startle you, dear? I am sorry; it was thoughtless of me."

"I thought it was your ghost," she said, with a nervous laugh. "We did not expect you home for another week at least. When did you arrive?"

"I have only just come from the station. I left my traps to be sent on, and walked home by the river-side, that I might see the place where I bid you good-bye a month ago. I little expected to have the happiness of meeting you here. Is it really you?" he added, bending to look at her; "you look as unsubstantial as a water-wraith. Maud, are you not well, or is it the moonlight makes you look so pale?"

"I am quite well," she answered, averting her head. "You will come in, Gilbert, and see papa?"

"Not to-night; I must go home. But first I want to say a few words to you." There was a pause. Maud's heart beat fast with the knowledge of what was coming. He seemed in no hurry to speak. Leaning back against the rail of the bridge, he took off his hat and pushed the hair from his forehead, looking thoughtfully away across the lake. The moonlight rested full upon his face, and Maud, glancing at him furtively, could not help thinking what a noble face it was, with its broad forehead, calm serious eyes, and mouth at once firm and tender. The features were not classical, perhaps, but they were full of character, and his bronzed complexion, dark moustache, and short pointed beard, gave him the look of a portrait by Vandyke.

"What happiness it is to be near you once more," he said at length. "It seems natural to meet you here in the spot where we parted. So many times, Maud, during the last month, I have seen you in dreams, standing there in your white dress, with the woods above you and the river at your feet! So many times I have fancied I heard your voice mingling with the murmur of other streams far away. Waking and sleeping you were always in my thoughts."

"You think of me too much," she faltered.

"Cure me of that bad habit if you can," was his reply, as he took her hand. "Maud, when I parted from you a month ago I carried a sweet hope away with me; will you ——"

She looked up suddenly, showing a pale, agitated face.

"Gilbert—forgive me!" she began.

He looked at her in surprise.

"What have I to forgive you, Maud?"

"For allowing you to hope, only to disappoint you after all."

The colour faded out of his bronzed face; he caught his breath as if he had received a blow.

"You never intended, then, to accept me ——"

"Yes, yes, I did," she interrupted, "though I wanted to have my liberty a little longer, but since then ——"

"Since then?" he repeated, still holding her hand, but looking away from her; "don't fear to tell me. Do you mean that—that you have learnt to care for some one else?"

Her silence answered for her.

He looked at the dark woods and the moonlit lake; looked at them, but did not see them; there was a mist before his eyes.

"Who is it?" he asked slowly.

Almost inaudibly she whispered the name.

"Reginald."

"*Reginald!*"

His tone was one of such emphatic astonishment that it startled her.

"Reginald!" he repeated. "Do you mean to say that he has made love to you? that he ——"

"He has proposed to me, and I have accepted him," she answered, as he paused. He let fall her hand, looking at her in incredulous amazement.

"Maud, what are you saying? my brother has proposed to you? Well, but—good heavens! he—No," he broke off, "I can't believe it. I cannot believe that he is such a scoundrel."

"Gilbert, what a word! You have no right to apply such a term to Reginald. If he has wronged you, it is ——"

"It is not of my own wrongs I am thinking," her companion interrupted, "though I might complain of his treachery in robbing me of—but let that pass. Do you love him, Maud?" he asked, looking at her with anxious eyes. The colour rushed to her face; she could not answer "Yes." In a flash, as it were, her own heart was revealed to her: but the revelation came too late.

He put his own construction on her silence. "I see. It was an unnecessary question. Of course you do. He is the sort of man women do love—to their sorrow." Then, with a look in his eyes such as she had never seen there before, he muttered: "He shall answer to me for this."

Almost at the same moment, Reginald's gay voice floated down from the plantation above.

> "Come into the garden, Maud,
> For the black bat, night, has flown ——"

Gilbert started and turned, looking up towards the path.

The girl, watching his face, shivered with a sudden dread.

"Don't meet him now," she said, anxiously, "you ——"

"You need not fear that there will be any dispute in your presence," he answered, divining her thought.

"Nor afterwards, when you are alone together?" she urged.

He did not reply; he was looking towards the plantation, listening to the musical voice ringing out in the evening stillness.

> "Come into the garden, Maud,
> I am here at the gate alone."

"Maud, Maud!" Reginald called, breaking off in his song. "I have good news for you. Are you still there?"

"Yes, I am here, I am coming," she responded, and would have hurried towards him, hoping to prevent the meeting, but her companion's firm fingers closed on her wrist and detained her.

The next moment Reginald's figure emerged from the trees into the strip of moonlight on the bank.

"Good child, to wait for me," he began. "Hallo, who is that? Why, Gilbert! Where have you dropped from? I thought you were in the wilds of the Highlands."

"I have returned, as you see," the other answered in his usually quiet tone, greatly to Maud's relief; though he made no movement to take the hand extended to him.

"You are just in time to offer us—Maud and me—your congratulations," Reginald proceeded, with a smile which had something mocking in its triumph. "We are——"

"I know. Maud has told me. But I think, with your permission, that I will defer my congratulations for the present, lest they should prove premature."

His brother gave him a quick glance, as if struck by something in his tone; then, with a slight shrug, took out his cigar-case.

"As you like," he said carelessly. "Hope you have enjoyed your tour, and distinguished yourself by some wonderful discovery as to the 'strata' of the Highlands?"

"I have made one very unexpected discovery, but it had nothing to do with geology."

Reginald started, and paused in the act of opening his cigar-case. Gilbert met his look with one full of significance.

"When and where did you make it?" Reginald asked, after a moment, dropping his voice so as to be inaudible to Maud.

"Only two days ago, at a place called Glenfalloch. You know it?"

He shook his head. He was lighting his cigar, and the flickering gleam of the match showed that his face was colourless.

"There is some one there who knows you, at any rate, and who has entrusted me with a letter for you. Shall I give it you now?"

"No, no, not now," he muttered hastily, with a glance at Maud.

"Come to me at the Châlet in three hours' time; we shall be secure from listeners there," Gilbert responded.

Then turning to Maud, who had caught only a word or two here and there of the latter part of the dialogue, he continued: "It is getting late. I will take you home."

Reginald uttered no protest against this invasion of his privileges, but stood moodily staring at the river.

"Good night," she said, putting out her hand to him.

He looked at her absently.

"You are going? oh—good night. God bless you, Maud," he added, with sudden and strange earnestness: and he would have kissed her, but Gilbert hastily, almost roughly interposed.

"Stand back—do not touch her! How dare you!" he said, hoarsely. His hands were clenched, his face white with suppressed passion; a lurid light burnt in his dark eyes.

Maud clung tremblingly to his arm.

"Come away—please!" she entreated; "remember what you promised."

But already he had commanded himself, and drawing her hand through his arm, turned away without another word.

In silence they traversed the plantation. He seemed absorbed in thought, and there was a stern set look on his face which made her timid of addressing him. Just as they emerged into the lawn, Mrs. Severne met them.

"You have stayed too long, Maud. I —— Why, is that Gilbert?" she exclaimed, breaking off.

"Yes, Mrs. Severne; you must scold me for detaining Maud."

"I shall scold her for not bringing you to the house at once," she answered. "Pray come in."

"Excuse me to-night. I have not yet been home. Kind regards to the Vicar; please tell him I will call to-morrow. Good night."

And he was gone.

"I am glad he has returned, but I wish with all my heart that he had never gone away," the Vicar's wife said with a sigh, as they crossed the lawn.

Maud understood the sigh. "I am very sorry you are disappointed, mother," she said tremulously.

"It is on your account we are grieved, Maud, your father and I. We fear you have made an unfortunate choice. However, if your happiness depends upon this marriage—and Reginald has just assured us that it does—there is nothing more to be said."

The girl's heart sank; she made no reply.

II.

An exquisite autumn night, full of misty sweetness; the sky luminous with stars, the world sleeping in a calm so profound as to be almost melancholy. Not a breath of wind swayed the trees in the plantation, or stirred their shadows on the Vicarage lawn, where the moonlight lay white and cold; only now and then, at long intervals, a thrill, a tremor ran through the leaves, as if a spirit had whispered to them as it passed.

It was nearly midnight. Early hours were the rule at the Vicarage, and all the household had long been sleeping, except Maud, who turned and tossed in her pretty white-curtained bed, too restless even to close her eyes. Never yet in her tranquil life of eighteen years had the girl felt so troubled. It was not only that her heart was full of vain regret and self-reproach, but there was an oppression on her spirits, a dark shadowy foreboding of evil, which she tried in vain to dismiss. She dared hardly acknowledge in what direction her fears pointed, but Gilbert's face, with that white threatening look of wrath upon it, rose before her as if painted on the darkness.

The window was wide open, and just opposite there was a break in the plantation, which gave a pretty glimpse, set like a picture in a frame of dark foliage, of the Châlet and the moonlit lake. She could not see the little waterfall, but she could hear its murmur; a distant dreamy sound which hardly seemed to break the silence. At length, insensibly, it lulled her to sleep.

How long she slept she did not know. She woke with a violent start, and sat up in bed, her heart beating tumultuously. A shot, followed by a cry, ringing out in the night stillness—those were the sounds which had roused her.

Her first thought was that there were poachers in Clieveden woods, but that supposition was quickly followed by another so terrible that it turned her cold.

A glance at the Châlet had shown her that a light was burning in Gilbert's study, and at the same moment there rushed back to her recollection a few words she had overheard in his whispered colloquy with his brother.

"At the Châlet, three hours hence." Were the brothers there now? Had Gilbert —— She sprang out of bed, and without asking herself what she intended to do, began to dress herself as quickly as her shaking fingers would let her.

Gliding noiselessly down stairs, she crossed the hall to the garden-door. "Timon," the house dog, was there before her, scratching and whining uneasily. He, too, had heard the shot, though no other inmate of the house seemed to have been roused by it.

She unfastened the bolt and chain and passed out, the dog bounding on before her across the lawn, and into the deep shadow of the plantation. When she reached the bridge she was obliged to pause to recover her breath. The window of the Châlet was open, but the lamp was so placed that she could see nothing of the occupants of the room. All looked peaceful enough, but she did not feel reassured. There was something ominous in the silence.

The entrance of the building was at the side, up a flight of wooden steps. The dog was barking angrily and scratching at the door, which was locked.

"Who is there?" demanded Gilbert's voice.

"It is I—Maud. Let me in."

She heard a smothered exclamation, then there was a pause.

"Wait a moment; I will admit you presently," he said.

A sound of hurried footsteps followed; a noise as of some piece of furniture being moved; then a long silence.

At length the door opened, and Gilbert stood before her, deadly pale; his dress disordered, his breath coming quickly. He looked at her as if she were a ghost, and for a moment neither spoke.

"Why are you here, Maud, at this hour?" he asked, at length. Without replying, she passed by him into the room, followed by the dog, who began sniffing suspiciously about the floor. It was the model of a bachelor's sanctum: panelled walls and a polished floor; plain furniture of unstained oak, a capacious writing-table in the middle; an easel in one corner; over the chimney-piece an array of pipes of all shapes, sizes, and colours; on the opposite wall, near the door, a trophy of arms, fencing-foils, fishing-rods, and hunting-whips, surmounted by a fox's head. To-night all was in disorder, and on the floor at Gilbert's feet lay a gun. Maud took in all these details before she turned to him again.

"Where is Reginald?" she asked, in a voice hardly above a whisper.

"He is not here, Maud, as you see."

"He has been here; there is his glove."

"Yes, he has been with me, but —— Why do you look at me so strangely?" he broke off, taking a step towards her.

She recoiled from him, putting out both hands to keep him away.

"I heard a shot," she panted; "there is a gun at your feet—did you—have you —— Gilbert! what has happened? Where is Reginald?"

For a moment he stood looking at her like one in a dream; then, instead of replying, he walked to the window, and after glancing out at the lake, silently beckoned her to approach.

"Look! who is that?" he said, pointing down.

At the same moment a boat—his own little canoe, the *Maud*—shot out suddenly from the boat-house below into the moonlit pool.

The occupant was Reginald. He did not even glance up at the window, though he must have heard Maud's involuntary exclamation, but with a few strokes of the paddles sent the canoe, swift as a swallow, across the lake, and on up the river towards the Hall.

"Thank heaven!" the girl exclaimed, as she drew back from the window. "Oh, Gilbert," she added, turning to her companion, "can you forgive me for having ——"

He put up his hand to interrupt her. There was a look of pain on his face which deepened every line. "I have no right to resent your suspicion, Maud," he said in a low tone; "it is only by heaven's mercy that I was not the cause of my brother's death to-night. Sit down a moment," he continued; "I promised Reginald that I would tell you all. He was with me when you came, just

now, but not wishing to meet you, left the Châlet by this door. Down, Timon—down, good dog!"

He stooped and showed her a trap-door in the floor, which communicated, by a flight of wooden steps, with the boat-house below.

"But why should he avoid me?" she questioned, when he returned to her side.

"I am going to tell you, Maud. It is a miserable story. I wish to heaven I could spare you the pain of hearing, and myself the shame of telling it; but you must know it."

"Stay," she interposed; "is it something you have found out about Reginald? something you learnt when you were in Scotland?"

He silently assented.

"Perhaps—perhaps you discovered that he was already engaged?" she hazarded.

"Worse than that. I discovered that he was already married."

She sank into a chair, looking up at him incredulously.

"Reginald married!" she gasped; "impossible! Oh, Gilbert, there must be some mistake."

He shook his head. "I saw his wife only two days ago. She is the daughter of the inn-keeper at Glenfalloch, and one of the loveliest women I ever met. Two years ago, when Reginald was salmon fishing in the Highlands, he passed through the place. He had intended to stay three days; he remained three weeks; and when he left Jeanie Henderson went with him ——"

"As his wife?"

"There was no marriage ceremony, and he declares he never regarded her as his wife, but he owns that he acknowledged her as such in the presence of witnesses; and that, by the law of Scotland, as he must have known, constitutes a legal marriage. He took her abroad, wandered about the continent for a few months, soon wearied of his beautiful but uneducated companion, and finally—deserted her. Not knowing his address (he had been careful to keep from her all knowledge of his real station), she could not trace him, and so returned half heart-broken to her father's roof.

"I had been staying some days at Glenfalloch Inn before Jeanie knew my name. When she learnt it she asked me, in an agitated tone, if I had a brother or relative named Reginald, and then—well, then I learnt what I have just told you. The next day I left the place, bearing a letter for Reginald from his wife. For that she is really his wife, I ascertained beyond doubt."

"And yet he would have married me!" Maud exclaimed. "What an escape I have had. I understand now," she added thoughtfully; "Sir Richard wished him to propose to me; that was the 'condition' Reginald spoke of."

"No doubt. Well," he pursued, "when we met here half an hour ago, we were both in the worst possible mood for such an interview.

I was suffering under a strong sense of personal wrong, and his careless, defiant manner seemed to add insult to injury. I told him briefly what I had learnt, and required his promise that he would immediately acknowledge his wife. He flatly refused to give any such engagement. I set my back against the door, and vowed he should not leave me till he did. In a spirit of angry jesting he took down a gun from the wall, and pointed it at me, with some taunting words which I need not repeat. Forgetting, in my excitement, that it was loaded, I seized it and tried to wrest it from him; in the struggle it went off—to my horror he uttered a cry and staggered backwards, his forehead covered with blood."

Maud shuddered and put both hands to her eyes.

"Mercifully, the bullet had only grazed his temple, but the thought of what *might* have been turned me cold and sick. In the sudden revulsion of feeling all anger was swept away, not from my heart only, but from his too. I bathed his forehead and gave him some water, and then he silently offered me his hand.

"'I have acted like a brute and a villain, Gilbert, I know that well enough,' he said in a changed voice; after a pause, 'you said you had a letter for me; give it me now,' he added. He read it through in silence till he came to a sentence near the end. 'The child—our child?' he repeated, with a start; 'good heavens, I did not know'—his face suddenly flushed and softened, and there were tears in his eyes. 'Poor little Jeanie,' he muttered, as he folded it again: 'I must have a heart of stone if I could resist this appeal. I shall go to her at once. I must leave you to break it to the pater, and—and to Maud. Tell her—no,' he broke off; 'I dare not say all I feel, and I won't say less. I will send no message.' I promised to make the best of the case to everyone, and if my father still refused to help him, I undertook to pay. Well, it does not matter what more passed between us, we were still talking when we heard the dog barking at the door, and directly afterwards your voice. To avoid meeting you he went out by way of the boat-house, and the moment I had closed the trap I admitted you."

Maud drew a long deep breath, and raised her head. Her mind was occupied by a mixture of feelings, too confused to be intelligible, but chief amongst them was relief. She was free once more. There might yet be a chance of winning back the treasure she had cast aside so carelessly.

Her companion heard the sigh and misinterpreted it. He sat down beside her and took her hand, looking tenderly into her face.

"Maud, my friend and sister, what can I say to you? I dare not even offer you sympathy, it is too like pity, and that, I know, you would resent. But child, you are young; your wounded heart will heal more quickly than you think, and the day will come when another more worthy of your love ——"

She withdrew her hand quickly, and turned away her head. A

look of pain crossed his face. Again he misunderstood the action.

"It was not of myself I was thinking," he said gently. "I shall not trouble you again with my own feelings. All that is past. Lest my presence should keep alive painful memories, I shall go away for a time, till——"

"Why should you go away?" she murmured, without raising her eyes; "let us—let us go back to the old times, when I was what you called me just now, your friend and sister."

He shook his head with a grave smile. "The old times are past and gone, and the old feelings with them. Having once been your lover, I can never again feel for you as a brother."

"But you ——" she began, then stopped abruptly, with a vivid blush. "I must go home," she added, rising.

He extinguished the lamp, and they went out into the cool, fragrant night.

The waterfall was still singing its monotonous song to the sleeping woods. To her ears it seemed to echo like a mournful refrain—"The old times are past and gone—past and gone!"

As she walked silently at her companion's side, her heart was swelling with vain regret. Bitter tears, such as she had never shed before, blinded her eyes. She longed to cry aloud all that filled her heart; but when she tried to speak no words would come.

Midway in the steep plantation path she stumbled over a projecting root, and would have fallen if Gilbert had not supported her. As he raised her he heard a suppressed sob.

He pressed her hand passionately to his breast.

"Maud, Maud, it breaks my heart to see you suffer! What can I do, what can I say to comfort you?"

"Don't leave me," she sobbed, clinging to his arm; "if you want to comfort me, don't go away! Gilbert ——"

Something in the pleading voice, something in the clinging pressure of the little hands on his arm, made his heart leap with a sudden sweet hope, wild though it seemed.

"Maud," he whispered, pausing; "don't tell me to stay unless you can tell me to hope too."

"Stay," she repeated, laying her tearful cheek against his sleeve.

"Child, do not trifle with me," he said, his voice stern with emotion. "I cannot be content with half your heart; I must have all, or none; and if you loved Reginald, how can you ——"

"I did not love him," she interrupted, looking up; "I mistook my own feelings. I was weak and foolish and perverse, and—oh! Gilbert, if you will but forgive me; if you will only take me to your heart again, I ——"

The sentence was never finished. Before she could utter another word she was clasped to that faithful heart, and Gilbert, in lover's fashion, closed her lips.

THE CATHEDRAL CHIMES, WORCESTER.

OVER the drowsy city, out on the frosty light,
Rang from the great Cathedral—Ten, of the passing night.
Ten the Commandments given, guard and obey them well,
Spotless and pure in beauty, keep them, O Israel!

Silence over the city; then when the hour is numbered,
Stealing like angel voices over the senses that slumbered,
Like the faint echo of Heaven pealing so softly and fair,
Came from the great Cathedral the chimes on the silent air:

Oh, let thy life be
Willingly given;
True in obedience
To Jesus and Heaven.

Over the quiet city, out on the frosty light,
Rang from the great Cathedral—Eleven, of the passing night.
Eleven were only found faithful out of the chosen few:
Grant, in Thy mercy, O Jesus, we may prove faithful and true.

Over the sleeping city, out on the frosty light,
Rang from the great Cathedral—Twelve, of the passing night.
This is the end of the nightwatch—down on the bended knee;
Grant when Thou comest, O Jesu, we may be watching for Thee.

Over the sleeping city, resting from labours done,
Rang from the great Cathedral—One, with its mystic tone.
One is our Faith, Lord, Redeemer; One is our Father above:
Grant, in Thy mercy, O Jesus, we may be *one* in Thy love.

Over the peaceful city, out on the silent night,
Came with a deeper warning—Two, in its solemn might.
Two are the ways set before us leading to Heaven or Hell:
Grant, in Thy mercy, O Jesus, we may choose rightly and well.

Over the sleeping city floated so gently to me,
Down from the great Cathedral, solemnly beautiful, Three.
Three is the mystical union of the great Godhead above:
Father, the Son, and the Spirit: threefold in cordage of love.

Over the waking city, pealing so softly once more,
Came from the great Cathedral, lightly and cheerily, Four.
Rouse ye, arouse ye from slumbers! gone is the silent night:
Raise up your hearts in thanksgiving to God who hath ordered the light.

Silence over the city: then when the hour is numbered,
Stealing like angel voices over the senses that slumbered,
Like the faint echo of Heaven pealing so softly and fair,
Came from the great Cathedral the chimes on the morning air:

Oh, let thy life be
Willingly given;
Onward to glory,
To Jesus and Heaven.

A. E. G.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

R. AND E. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER X.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

WE have already described the house at Ostend, in which Mrs. Dangerfield received Adela Granard, with its spacious reception-rooms, as bare of all comfort as was the fast-waning life of their mistress. They were, however, well enough adapted for such gatherings of curious, half-agitated spectators as from time to time attended the séances of the Professor; and combined several advantages in their arrangement for the better display of his skill in illustrating his popular lectures. Curtains and mirrors artfully placed, with sundry mechanical contrivances for producing light and darkness, played their part in keeping up the desired illusion; and as those who came generally wished to be impressed, or puzzled, it was seldom that any went away disappointed. They would say to each other that it was all trick—that he was a clever conjurer in all but the name—but, nevertheless, there was more in it all than you could account for, and their unbelieving friends must go and judge for themselves.

One of these meetings had been held with tolerable success; and the principal performer, weary with his exertions, had retired to his private apartment to dine. However lightly domestic comfort might be regarded in the other parts of the house, no such carelessness was permitted where the master was concerned. His room, though of moderate size, was handsomely fitted up for ease and convenience, as well as with objects of taste to charm the eye or imagination; and his meals, when taken at home, were supplied by the best

restaurant in the town, though served up by his confidential servant, old Justine. On the present occasion this functionary was unusually slow in making her appearance; and the Professor had twice rung his bell, and three times compared his watch with the elegant French clock on the marble slab, before her shuffling step in the passage was succeeded by the tap of her tray against the door.

"Come, come, my good friend," said he, addressing her in French, which he spoke well, and she in a fluent patois; "I have been used to bet on the punctuality of my maître d'hôtel, and to-day I should have lost to a certainty."

"Monsieur loses every day on something," was the old woman's retort, as she placed the soup on the table. "You told me there would be two of you to dine, and I have been waiting for the other. Where is he?"

"On the road still, and I can wait no longer. Give me some wine, Justine. I have had a hard day's work, and am not so young as I was. This sort of thing will be too much for me some day."

"And Monsieur has lèt a young one slip through his fingers that would have saved him half the trouble," muttered his aged confidante as she uncorked the wine. "That boy was worth all those clumsy men put together. He had a gift; and they have only fingers and thumbs. If no one else saw the difference to-day, *I* did."

"To own the truth, so did I, and therefore I put forth extra power, and that knocks me up afterwards. But don't accuse me of letting that youngster slip; it was you sent him off while my back was turned."

"And who turned Monsieur's back but himself? Did I not advise him not to go to Paris, leaving everything without a guard? What would he have said had he come home and found the bird flown, without a trace where to follow it? But the boy ought to have come back by this time, and if he does not return soon we shall lose him."

"Never fear, old friend; he can be as useful at a distance as close at hand, and has done us good service already. And that reminds me that you advanced him some money for his journey. There it is for you, and a little over."

"Monsieur is very good. I wish I had earned it better. I did what I could; but that old English cat has eyes everywhere, and while she is in the house I can answer for nothing. Will Monsieur take any more soup?"

"Why?" asked he, looking up sharply. "Have you been spicing it?"

"Hé! Moi! Why should I waste spice on Monsieur, who has all the secrets of nature at his fingers' ends? No. And if he had seen the eyes in that young lady's face as I saw them, he would have felt that she was worth his coming to see."

"I wish I had seen her, certainly: but I must just give you a

hint, my good woman, that if you shake your pepper-box too briskly, and get into trouble, you are not to expect I shall help you out of it."

"Monsieur is pleasant. He knows I do nothing without his leave: or that English Ma'amselle would have been ordered home for change of air long ago."

"I daresay; but she is useful where she is, and must not be touched. Do you hear what I say? *Must* not—till I give permission."

"Good—I can wait," muttered the old woman, adding something in her native tongue which passed unheeded. In the act of changing her master's plate, she stopped short to listen.

"Yes," he said, in answer to the gesture, "I thought I heard the door bell a minute or two ago. If it is the doctor, show him in at once."

"The doctor?" repeated the woman slowly, stopping on her way to the door. "Is *he* the visitor you expected by train?"

"Of course he is, and very sharp set he will be, unless he is considerably altered. Leave the soup, and be quick with the other dishes; and, look here—I want to taste that wine that came in this morning for Madame."

"It is very dear, Monsieur. You said it was to be of the first quality."

"Exactly; and I want to be sure I am not cheated. There is the bell again. M. le docteur has a keen nose for a rôti, and grudges the lost time. Show him in directly, do you hear?"

The tone was significant and well understood. In a very few minutes after her departure the door was gently re-opened by a small, light-haired man in spectacles, strongly marked with small-pox, and with only a certain decision in the lines of the lower jaw to rescue his features from insignificance. He stood a moment in the doorway, as if doubtful what would be the nature of his reception; and when the Professor came forward with outstretched palm and a cordial, if slightly patronising welcome, bowed as he accepted the grasp of friendship, and before uttering a syllable, carefully closed the door.

"You are late, my dear Mowatt; I expected you before this," said his host, glancing at the clock.

"Did you, Professor? I rather wonder you expected me at all," was the reply, as Mr. Mowatt pulled off his rough great coat, and deposited it with his hat in a corner.

"You are wrong, my good fellow. A man like yourself always knows where there is an opening, and rushes at it. There is the proof that I was sure of you—your place waits at the table. You must be hungry after your journey."

"I was hungry before, or I might not have taken it," said Mowatt, as he unfolded his napkin, beginning upon his roll as if half famished. His host smiled, though not uncourteously, and

helped him to soup and wine before entering into further conversation; glancing occasionally at the thin, poverty-stricken form and features, as if conscious of the marked difference from his own.

Cosmo Dangerfield was at this time a handsome man, with a portly figure; and though dissipation and excess had begun to leave their trace both on his complexion and features, his personal appearance was too valuable not to be carefully preserved and attended to. No one could accuse him of sharing poor Hester's neglect of externals; expense was no object compared with the effect he laboured, not unsuccessfully, to produce. His lot being cast in a generation that no longer required a sage to wear a flowing robe, trimmed with costly fur, and girdled with a belt inscribed with cabalistic signs, he could only rely on the grave, courteous dignity of his bearing, and the tokens of wealth and distinction with which he was surrounded, for making an impression on the various temperaments with which he came in contact. But he had as many aspects as circumstances required: and the good-humoured familiarity of his conversation with old Justine was not easier to assume than the protecting hospitality extended to his bidden, but tardy, guest.

"I do not wonder at anyone's appetite in such weather. We shall turn into wolves soon, if it lasts. My poor wife seems to shrink up like a withered leaf before it. Here comes a hot cutlet —that will suit your book, I know. I ordered them expressly, remembering your affection for the article."

"Very kind of you," said his medical friend. "Unlike most affection, it has not cooled by absence."

And the celerity with which the viands were despatched confirmed his words, while it increased his entertainer's complacency in watching him.

"Fill M. le docteur's glass, Justine. The new vintage, my good woman; we must have his sanction before trying it on Madame. This weather is terrible work for an invalid."

"The weather is on the turn; the wind is changing," said Mowatt, setting down his empty glass, which the Professor immediately refilled.

"Changing? I am glad to hear it, for I have been getting very uneasy about her state. She was never satisfied till she had sent her daughter away, and now does nothing but fret over the separation; if I could have been spared, I should have been tempted to run over to England and bring the poor child back. Fetch us the rôti, Justine; the doctor is eating nothing."

Mowatt had, in fact, laid down his knife and fork, and was looking thoughtfully at his wine. If he was pondering what had just been said, he did not commit himself by any reply.

"Yes," resumed Dangerfield, after a short silence, as if thinking aloud, "I am uneasy—very uneasy—about her; and so irreparable would be the loss that I cannot contemplate it without a shudder.

Still, something may be done by skill; and, as the authorities here seem quite at fault as to her case, I should like to have your opinion. At any rate, if there is anything on her mind—any wish ungratified—you may be able to find it out and let me know."

Mowatt bowed, and seemed on the point of asking a question, but was checked by the opening of the door. His host, supposing it to be the re-entrance of Justine, began with his pleasant, "Come, good old friend, quick with the roast, before it gets cold," and stopped in his turn on perceiving that the new comer was Miss Joseph.

It was rarely that his self-possession failed him, and though disconcerted for a moment, he rose from his chair with a polite enquiry if he could be of any service—if she would be friendly enough to join them at table, or, at any rate, take a glass of wine. All which civilities met with no further response than is expressed by "declined with thanks," and Miss Joseph turned from him to his visitor.

"When you have done dinner, Mr. Mowatt, Mrs. Dangerfield will be glad to see you."

"I am at her service now—I have dined," said he, attempting to rise, but checked by the Professor's lifted hand.

"You must excuse me, my dear sir: you have *not* dined yet; as these dishes, coming in, bear witness. Mrs. Dangerfield would not forgive me if I allowed you to go before you had had time to rest and refresh yourself. Do you think she would, Miss Joseph?"

"How much she can forgive is more than I can say," returned Miss Joseph. "I will tell her Mr. Mowatt will come in a quarter of an hour."

"Do so; and, that as he has had a long, cold journey, and has a good deal further to go, it was a happy thought of his to look in upon us like this. I will bring him up to her myself, and perhaps she will give us a cup of tea."

Miss Joseph gave the speaker one fixed look, and without further ceremony walked out of the room.

An expressive silence followed her departure. The mask of cordiality had dropped from Cosmo Dangerfield's face, and he sat for some minutes in moody thoughtfulness: which Justine, as she did her office, failed not to notice and speculate upon. Twice had she filled his glass with the rare wine that was "ordered for Madame," before she ventured on a remark.

"Ma'amselle seems to be in Monsieur's confidence to-night."

The low growl that was his only answer perhaps encouraged her to go further.

"As M. le docteur is a compatriote, perhaps Ma'amselle Joseph would let him prescribe for her, and recommend her a little change."

"Go down and make us some of your best coffee, old woman; you understand that better than meddling in my affairs. Mind now!" lifting his finger, "pure coffee, and good."

"Yes, yes," she muttered discontentedly, "I know. It is but waiting a little, and Monsieur will be for making it himself." And as she shuffled out of the room, the Professor rose and bolted the door behind her.

"He needs patience who has to deal with women," was his sententious remark. "Come, Mowatt, you are only trifling; do not forget how much further you have to go."

"I can hardly forget what I have never heard," returned the other, drily; "perhaps you can enlighten me."

"I think I can. How has fortune treated you lately?"

"As she generally treats those who depend upon her. When her sledge wants lightening, she pitches one of us out to the wolves. I've been wolf-fighting lately till I've got into pretty good training, as you may judge by this," lifting first one elbow and then the other, to show how little gloss was left on the cloth. The Professor nodded his head, with a look of sympathy.

"The fact is, Mowatt," he said, "for a clever fellow, you are given to rashness; that may answer once, but it is ruinous in the long run. If you do get a chance, my advice to you, as a friend, is to go in for steadiness, and stick to one thing—one line—till you make it pay. Once get your head well up, and you have that in you that will carry you on, if you choose."

"Thank you, Professor; you are very good. It is rather like advising me, when I sit down to a dinner like this, to be sure to eat it. Your advice shall be followed—when I get the chance."

"It is very near you now, my good fellow: fill your glass—we will open another bottle. That little journey we were speaking of is in the direct road, and all expenses will be paid. How far are you willing to go?"

"I am to avoid rashness, you say. I'll go as far as you can bear me company, to ensure my prudence. And I must be certain of getting back again."

"Quite reasonable. And now, before we go any further, or settle about going at all, I want to tell you that I am seriously uneasy about my wife. Nothing does her any good; and she has lost faith in all the doctors here, except old Thaddeus, who will not come into the house. She once mentioned you as being considered clever: and perhaps you may hit upon something which the others have missed."

"I will do my best. Shall we go to her at once?"

"One word more; you may receive a wrong impression from her manner to me, or from what she may say in the irritable state of her nerves. I am not a man of sentiment, and it is no secret that my home has not been the happiest that could be found; but, if it were, I could not feel more keenly that every day my poor wife's life is lengthened is a day gained—and a gain for which a good price is to be gladly paid."

"Just so—very natural," replied his medical friend. "I have generally found people willing to pay while the danger lasted. But if you are so anxious, why have you been supine till now? Money being no object, you might have had the best advice in London or Paris long ago."

"I might; but it would not have brought me a friend like yourself, who can serve me and his own interest at the same time. Have you had wine enough? We will drink our coffee in the next room, before going to Madame's apartment."

Coffee was waiting when they entered the room in question: but Mr. Dangerfield noticed that his guest, after accepting a cup and stirring it once or twice, left it untasted.

"What is amiss? We rather pride ourselves on Justine's coffee."

"No doubt with reason. But after all that good wine, a cup of Mrs. Dangerfield's tea will suit me better."

"I see: you are going in for prudence in detail, as well as in large matters. To encourage you, I will show you something." He opened a desk and took out some papers. "Do you recognise these?"

The grimace his visitor made was as if a snake had been offered him. "I should think I did: and, of the two, I prefer Justine's coffee."

"They are harmless, old fellow—I have bought them all up. That is one wolf choked off, eh?"

"One? A howling pack of them. My dear Professor, if this is really ——"

"Really friendship, and not exchanging a dozen wolves for a jaguar. No fear of that, Mowatt. Whoever works with me must have no other affairs to mind; so, if it is a relief, all the better for both."

"It is an immense one; I own it," said Mowatt, drawing a long breath. "But how I am to give an equivalent, remains for you to show me."

"I will show you in good time. Mowatt," turning sharply upon him, "you got into trouble once—professionally—did you not?"

"I did," said the other, hoarsely. "Why?"

"I wished to be sure it was true—that a mistake of some kind ruined your prospects in England."

"That is not the whole truth. You should add, that I had an enemy, jealous of my skill; and that directly he saw a chance, he ran me down. No one would receive my explanation, or hear my arguments, and I was swept away by the clamour."

"You had an enemy in your own profession?"

"Yes; and being a popular, flourishing man, he had it all his own way with the authorities and the public. He knew I differed from

some of his favourite views; and, when I was ruined, Sir Marcus Combermere had the field to himself."

The Professor stared in unfeigned surprise. "So! He is the enemy in question! This brings matters to a very neat point. Light one of those cigars—unless your prudence is gone mad, you may do it safely. No one ever meddles with anything of mine."

"Mrs. Dangerfield will not object?" suggested Mowatt, as he selected one of the choice sort before him.

"My dear fellow, when you have listened carefully to me, you will understand our domestic economy too well to need such questions. Up to a certain limit—it covers a pretty wide range—I am master, as I ought to be, everywhere; and it is only beyond it that I require help. No one in this house ever objects to anything I choose to do—they only resist me passively; and passive disobedience is the one rock ahead which you must help me to weather."

"In return for the wolves?"

"Don't mention that—it is only a trifle compared with what I hope to do for you later. Ah, Mowatt, you little know what it is to be considered a rich man, and to know you are only living on a paltry allowance, which may cease any moment."

"I should not object to trying it," said Mowatt, as he knocked off the ashes of his cigar against the lance of a little bronze knight, charging a dragon for the purpose.

"If you did, you would soon understand the aggravation of an income that led you into expenses, and made you incur debts, as a matter of course, while you could not touch the capital, or even encumber it. Over and over again I could have trebled any sum I might have raised; but, beyond the annual interest, the money has always been out of my reach."

"But this is just what lawyers and settlements are made for," said Mowatt: "to consider a man as the natural enemy of his wife, and still more so of her children. If it is all tied up on Miss Stormount, what is to be done?"

"It is not tied up at all, except that it is entirely at the disposal of my wife, and secured from me. She can leave it as she pleases—and, of course, has left it to the child."

"Do you mean to say that it is all in the poor lady's own power still?"

"Entirely."

"The money is in her power, and she in yours? I do not see the difficulty."

"That I quite understand—no one could see it who had not my experience. I told you just now how hard it was to deal with women, whose very weakness turns your weapon's edge. She has yielded to me on every other point; on this one she is invulnerable: and I need not say that I have done my best to prove to her she is mistaken."

"I am sure you have. Having failed, you expect me to see what can be done."

"You are right. I have failed, and her health is failing too; and I may be left with more debts than dividends, unless she can be persuaded that her daughter's interests will be best consulted by her dealing liberally with me. Emily should either be left to my guardianship, with a handsome provision for my life, or the property should be divided between us: in either case, I should engage you as my permanent medical attendant, with a regular salary, and all expenses paid; while, of course, your present services would be remunerated professionally. You are willing? Then come and have your cup of tea, for Mrs. Dangerfield keeps early hours. She is quite a recluse in her habits, and you must not be surprised to find her moping almost in the dark. To some nervous systems dulness appears a necessity."

No reply being required, Mowatt attempted none, and followed in silence. The flush which the generous wine had brought into his thin cheeks had changed to paleness; and though his compressed lips showed no faltering in purpose, there was something distrustful in the look he gave his patron, which it was as well the latter did not see.

Being cautioned against surprise at darkness and dulness, he was the less prepared for the reception that awaited them—while on his companion the effect was evidently disconcerting. With no other help than that of Miss Joseph, Hester had contrived to carry out an idea which had seized her mind directly she heard of his coming. She would not be found a wretched, neglected invalid—she would receive him as her husband's guest, and prove to both that there was nothing alarming in her case, that she was getting better, and could sit up and behave like other people. The room, which Adela had seen so dull and ill-lighted, blazed with wax candles in sconces, collected from the reception rooms, whence also Miss Joseph had brought several of the pots and vases of flowers, which had been provided for the afternoon's lecture. There was a clear fire in the open grate, and the table was spread for a tempting English tea; over which Miss Joseph presided in hastily donned festal garb of black silk and violet ribbons. A bright shawl had been flung over the faded sofa, on which sat Hester Dangerfield; she as hurriedly transformed as her apartment. All the resources that her wardrobe could afford to meet the exigencies of the moment had been called into play: her once beautiful hair was dressed with care; and though the lace of her cap might be discoloured, and her gown have lost its freshness, the one was fine old Mechlin and the other a costly brocade. Her colour was high, and her eyes were full of animation. How she produced the effect was best known to herself; but, as she said to her faithful friend, who tried to calm her excitement, even by obeying every whim, said resolutely: "He shall have no excuse,

if it is in human power to prevent it, for pronouncing me near enough to my end to justify his fetching Emily. I may die all the sooner, but I will be alive and well to-night!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRAMAH KEY.

THE Professor was not easily put out of countenance. He saw what these tactics meant, and accepted them as a matter of course.

"My dear Hester," he said, as she came forward to greet the visitor, "I am sure you forgive me for insisting on Mr. Mowatt's taking some dinner before coming upstairs: though I believe he has been thinking so much of the cup of tea you promised him, that he hardly did it justice. I dare not let Justine know, Miss Joseph, with what scorn he treated her coffee in comparison."

Hester laughed gaily, as she extended to the guest her thin, burning hand, on which glittered some costly ornaments, the cherished remains of a once overflowing jewel box. "Mr. Mowatt is very good to come near us at all, after being sent for in such weather, for so little cause. There is no persuading gentlemen to let well alone; and if you shiver on a cold January day, you are on the verge of bronchitis, and next door to decline. It is dreadful for travelling, Mr. Mowatt, is it not? Quite unfit for those who are delicate, if nothing else."

"The weather is changing," said the Professor, pointedly. "The thermometer has risen several degrees, and the wind has quite gone round."

"Ah, that accounts for my being so much better. I wondered why my chest felt so relieved. Miss Joseph, is your tea ready? We must do our best to welcome Mr. Mowatt, even if he finds there is not more amiss with his patient than a little sunshine would cure."

"Sunshine is not always to be had for the asking, Mrs. Dangerfield, I am afraid," said Mowatt, cheerfully; "but we must try and find a substitute."

"Oh, you mean warmth indoors—the warmth of hearth and home. Winter can make its way even there; otherwise the rest would matter little."

"You have not much of it in this room; it is like a forcing-house," observed the Professor, looking round inquisitively. "The smell of these plants is very bad for you at night. I will have them sent into the passage."

"You will please to do nothing of the kind. For this evening you have made yourself my visitor; and all you are allowed to do is to drink your tea, make yourself generally agreeable, and admire everything you see. Do you hear, sir?" she added, offering him the cup Miss Joseph had filled, with a tone in her voice, and an arch-

ness in her manner, that for a moment brought back Mrs. Stormount before him, as he had known and bowed before her first.

"To hear is to obey," he said; "and, to combine all commands in one, let me remark, my dear Hester, while trying to drink this excellent but scalding tea, that I always knew you had a pretty hand, but not that you had so beautiful a ring."

"It is a beauty," she replied, slipping it from her finger. "But the stone is rather loose; I am afraid of its falling out."

"Shall I have it reset? It is a splendid diamond."

"Ah, if you were but going to Paris again, I would ask you to take it to that jeweller's in the Palais-Royal. I forget his name, but I will not trust it to anyone else."

"I will see about it, if you like."

"No, no; if you could take it yourself, at once, and give the order and bring it home with you, I should be easy. The time was, Mr. Mowatt, when if a lady expressed such a wish, a devoted husband would have started by the next train; but we are less chivalrous in the present day."

"If I know the Professor, Mrs. Dangerfield," said Mowatt, smiling, "he is just the man to start off when we are all asleep, and turn up again before we know he is gone. I think you may safely trust him with the ring."

"My dear Hester," said her husband, kindly, "if I did not offer to go at once, as you say, it is because I could not bear to leave you so unwell. But if Mr. Mowatt is tolerably satisfied with you, and thinks I can be spared, it will not be weather or distance that shall stand in my way. I would go farther than Paris to do you service, as you know."

"Yes, yes," she said, with feverish eagerness. "I know you would—I know you would, Cosmo; but I could not spare you to go farther. Paris is far enough—you can go and return so easily; but I should miss you if you went farther than that."

"As you please, my dear Hester. I will leave you now to Mr. Mowatt, and he will give me his opinion afterwards." He put the ring into his waistcoat pocket, and turned to leave the room. Miss Joseph took up a candle, and lighted him along the vestibule. He thanked her carelessly, observing that after such an illumination as she had got up, the passages seemed to be in extra darkness.

"She has had her share of the darkness," retorted the lady, "and when she wishes for more light she shall have it, while I am here."

"No fear of her wanting light while you *are* here, Miss Joseph, for it seems to me that you see and know everything that happens—perhaps a little more."

"What I do see is sad enough, without my inventing anything worse. There, you need not trouble yourself about the vases and things—I moved them all myself, and I will put them back again."

"I have perfect confidence in you, Miss Joseph," was his amiable reply, as he disappeared within his own regions.

She smiled bitterly, and shook her head, knowing in what his confidence consisted—in allowing her, out of the hardly-earned savings of many years, to defray not only all her own expenses, but any extra ones incurred by the invalid.

Mrs. Dangerfield's voice, meanwhile, was becoming more and more excited. She was talking vehemently of the journeys she meant to take when the warm weather came; she felt quite tired of being shut up; and she hated Ostend. Her little girl was in the North of England, and she meant to take a house there; it had always been a dream of hers to live at the Lakes. Then, with a passionate and bitter cry, she clasped her hands above her head.

"Dream of living, did I say? That dream has long been over. Nothing is left for me now but to try and die alone."

She threw herself back on the sofa. Mowatt, who had been watching his opportunity, went up to her at once, with the authority of a medical adviser, and laid his hand on her arm.

"If you will only be calm, Mrs. Dangerfield, and trust yourself to me, I will do all I can for you, and never leave you while you wish me to stay. Come here, Miss Joseph," as that lady re-entered the room; "sit down here and support her a little, but do not let her talk; I cannot judge of her pulse till she is quiet."

Miss Joseph obeyed; and Hester, leaning her weary head on her shoulder, accepted the breathing time, that she might collect her strength for one more effort. Her forced animation dying away, Mowatt could easily read the condition to which she was reduced, and that whatever he meant to do must be done soon. He exerted himself accordingly to soothe and tranquillise her spirits; and, apparently, with so much success that he ventured a remark on the deep anxiety his friend Dangerfield had felt on her account. In a moment he was aware, by the bounding of the pulse he was watching, that this was the secret of the malady.

"He sent for you to see me that you might tell him, and all the world, my condition was hopeless and that my child must be brought home. Mr. Mowatt, he has done what he could to make me poor and helpless, but I am not quite so destitute as to be without the means of rewarding faithful friendship. Shall I find a friend in you?—or only another instrument of torture in a hand that has already too many?"

"There is no hand on earth, I hope, that has power to make me torture anyone, Mrs. Dangerfield, much less a suffering lady. But, if you believe this possible, I have only to wish you good night and go away."

He made a movement to rise. She stopped him with an imploring gesture.

"I will trust you—I put myself in your hands. Prescribe for

me—order everything I am to do—you shall be obeyed to the letter; but do not leave the house for an hour. You shall be comfortably accommodated; Miss Joseph will see to that; and nothing shall be spared that you require: but keep watch over me night and day, if you would not be that thing you so abhor, and which he will try to make you. Where is he now?"

"He said he would wait for my report."

"To know if he may go to Paris. Do you really think I cared about the setting of that stone? I knew it was a bait he could not resist. He will take it away with him, and I shall never see it again; but it may buy me a few days' peace, and that is worth more than my poor Harry's diamonds."

About an hour later, Mowatt went back to his friend.

"Well," said Cosmo Dangerfield, impatiently, for he had been pacing the room in expectation, "what is your verdict?"

"Give me one of your cigars, and I will tell you," said Mowatt, who looked rather exhausted, and, in spite of the cold weather, was wiping his brows. His host made an impatient gesture, but complied with the request, and took one himself. Both smoked in silence for awhile: then Mowatt spoke.

"Her state is critical, but there need be no immediate danger—with precautions. If you want her to live, you must take a different line. You have driven her hard, you say, and you know the result. Try now what humouring will do; carry out her every whim and fancy, whatever they may be. She wants soothing, not fretting, and you best know how to give it her."

"Am I to go to Paris, or not? That is the point."

"I think you had better."

"Then you will stay till I return?"

"I will if you wish it."

"And you will work in my interest, meanwhile?"

"So long as you do not thwart my efforts by exciting her poor nerves to madness."

"And about the child? Ought she not to come back?"

"Certainly not at present; it might be the death of the mother."

"Thank you, my dear fellow. That is just what I wanted to know. I am off by the early train, so I shall wish you good-night. Rather a change of tone," he muttered to himself, after Mowatt left him, "suspiciously sudden. I wonder if she has bought him over? This looks like hidden funds that I did not reckon upon," turning the ring over in his hand, "and uncommonly like a little game to keep me out of the way. If I thought so—well, I'll be even with them both: and perhaps take a longer trip than they suppose."

The Professor was gone when Hester enquired after him the next morning; and as she had foretold, she gained a day or two of peace. Indeed the relief from the fears that had been weighing on her mind, aided by the soothing treatment of her new doctor, on whom she seemed

implicitly to rely, produced so beneficial an effect on her nerves, that she almost thought she had taken a turn for the better. Both to Mowatt and to Miss Joseph, who divided the needful attendance between them, she would talk of her younger days, and former friends. But she rarely touched on her troubles, or alluded to her child; until the receipt of a letter from Adela led to the story of her visit being discussed, and told to the doctor. It gave him the much wished for opening. Cautiously feeling his way, as one who knew well how perilous was the situation, he drew her on to speak of Emily's future prospects and the provision made for her guardianship; and dexterously contrived, without asking a leading question, to moot the point of the implied slight on her husband. 'Of course he had been handsomely provided for, if he was not left guardian; the insertion of his name as Emily's heir could only be looked upon as a precarious contingency. Would it not—he suggested as a friend honoured with her confidence, and wishing well by all parties—would it not be wise to consider whether Miss Stormount's happiness might not be better secured by avoiding all cause of irritation with a man of so sensitive a temperament and such remarkable gifts—a man likely to be won by trust and generosity, but keenly resentful of anything like neglect? Even if Emily had less money at command, would it not be better that she had gained a friend in one who had so much in his power?

Rather to his surprise, she listened calmly, and seemed to ponder all he said; but declined answering till she had thought it over. The night passed quietly, and she was well enough the next day to receive the visit of an old clerical friend, whom Cosmo Dangerfield had hitherto kept at arm's length. This soothed her, and she slept till evening, when, of her own accord, she renewed the subject.

"Do not think," she said, "that I have not thought of this before, or asked myself again and again, whether I might not buy Emily's ransom with half of her father's wealth. It is simply this—*I dare not;* had it been possible, my present husband would have got it all from me long ago. *I dare not* lay on that innocent child the sin I have myself committed—God forgive me in His mercy! I have been punished for my fault, sorely punished; and I trust the punishment will soon be at an end. Meanwhile you shall both know as much as I may tell you. This key," touching a gilt one belonging to a Bramah lock, "opens that leather box, and in it is a bundle of papers, which must be delivered, unopened, to Adela Granard after my death. Take it, dear Miss Joseph, for to you I look to do it. Mr. Walrond has my will—I have nothing to add to it. This"—she put a small packet in Mowatt's hand—"will, I hope, remunerate you for your kindness. As to my faithful friend here, I have nothing to give her, but the knowledge that she has been everything to me—mother, sister, friend. My child will one day know it, and return it all in love."

There was silence for some little time; Miss Joseph, who had

looked very worn all day, was seized with a fit of convulsive sobbing, without the relief of tears. At Mowatt's urgent entreaty, she consented to lie down and endeavour to recover her exhausted strength; he promising not to leave the patient unwatched for a moment. Hester was much distressed, and could not be easy till she had called up Justine, who had shown the greatest attention to M. le docteur ever since her master's departure, and had lately expressed more sympathy with the sufferings of Madame. To her Mrs. Dangerfield spoke kindly, gave her a napoleon, and begged her to take care that Mademoiselle had all she required. The old woman seemed touched, and shed a few tears, promising compliance.

"Mademoiselle has done too much; she wants food and rest," Justine said to Mowatt. "I will see that she has both: and if M. le docteur does not take care, he will be in the same case."

"No fear of that, Justine; and look here, I must see what you give Miss Joseph. Bring her tray to me first."

"She shall have just what I make for Monsieur, and have made for you every day," said the old woman, huffily. "If that is not good enough, she must go elsewhere."

In due time she brought a tempting basin of soup, and some coffee, both prepared with her best skill; and, as she suggested, there was enough for both Mademoiselle and the doctor. He agreed; and having tasted both, sent some of each to the tired nurse, conscious that before the night was over they might want all the strength which it could give them.

Was it imagination?—or did he feel, after he had seen his patient fall asleep, as if something unusual were at work in his brain, not beguiling him to slumber at his post, but stirring up every faculty of thought and memory, with an almost painful vehemence, making it difficult to preserve silence, and impossible to be quite still. Had he over-tasked his own powers, and was his broken rest avenging itself by filling his veins with fire? Perhaps a cup of coffee might quiet his nerves. He was in the act of heating some of Justine's beverage over a spirit lamp, when Miss Joseph suddenly came in, as if walking in her sleep, her eyes open, but her manner strange and unnatural.

"Don't touch that! don't touch that!" she whispered, hoarsely. "It's not right—it has made me quite ill—I came to warn you"—and it seemed as if, indeed, she had done her utmost, for she staggered to an arm-chair, and in a few seconds was sleeping profoundly.

The truth flashed on Mowatt at once, and he saw the peril he had escaped. Privately devoting Justine and her cookery to future retribution, he took prompt measures for destroying any evil effect on himself from the small quantity he had swallowed; for his fellow watcher he could do nothing but protect her from the cold, and let her sleep in peace. For two hours his vigil was undisturbed, though sight,

hearing, and touch seemed to be endowed with triple acuteness, in expectation of what was to follow. His patient had grown restless, and he had just put his hand on her pulse, when she suddenly sat up in bed, her eyes staring wildly at the wall, and pointing with her finger at an object that at once brought Mr. Mowatt to his feet.

It was the shadow of some person, on the other side of the bed, and it appeared to be that of a man. Evidently the poor lady thought so, for she uttered a piercing cry. "Harry! Harry! are you come to forgive?"

The shadow vanished instantly, but it had done its work: Hester Dangerfield's weary frame was at rest.

It was an awful moment, even for one to whom such scenes were more or less familiar. The doctor's leading emotion when he had become convinced that all was over, was one of intense resentment at the manner in which his patient had been persecuted to the end. As soon as he could leave the bed, he carefully searched the room, and that next to it, and the passage, in hopes of clearing up the mystery of the unknown intruder; but he could find no trace of anyone. The whole house seemed still, as if conscious of what had fallen upon it; and, half hesitating a few moments, whether to summon assistance or not, Mowatt returned to the chamber of death.

Miss Joseph still slept heavily, but had changed her posture, and as her head drooped over the side of the chair, the Bramah key, which she had slung on a black ribbon round her neck, hung down so as to catch Mowatt's eye. He stopped short, and stood thinking.

Certainly, he could not boast of success in his mission; Dangerfield would scoff if he claimed a recompense beyond what his professional service might deserve; and he was in Dangerfield's power, and knew rather too much to be safe. Would it not be as well to gain something in the way of a family secret, that might enable him, at least, to bargain with more security? If at any time it were to be restored, it would be easy to lay the act on Justine; and he should take care to terrify her beforehand, on account of what she had already done. There was that shadow, too, to be accounted for—quite enough to prove that the poor lady was surrounded by those who might have robbed her.

"It is not robbery, only self-defence," he told his conscience, as his dexterous fingers untied the ribbon, secured the key, and opened the box. It contained very little besides the sealed packet, addressed to Miss Granard, which Mowatt carefully concealed, and then replaced the key, without disturbing the sleeper's repose.

We pass over her awakening, and the melancholy work of that morning, in which Mowatt displayed all the zeal and goodwill of a friend, taking every painful duty off Miss Joseph's hands, and only leaving her when (as he said) a message had come to summon him to attend a serious case at Liège.

That strange, sad morning had been a very happy one to another of our acquaintances. A great wish of Dr. Thaddeus' heart had been gratified by the safe arrival at his house of a live "specimen" for his museum, intended ultimately to be stuffed and labelled with others, but at present administering to the ends of science by causing terror and rage wherever it appeared; being a snake of deadly reputation, and a temper by no means improved by travelling. That an official document was in course of preparation at some of the railways to demand penalties of such philosophers as chose to have dangerous beasts forwarded by public conveyances, mattered to our naturalist not at all; nor was he more touched by the yells of his own domestics, when, in the glee of his heart, he made them sharers of his satisfaction. Not one could be persuaded to lend a hand in conveying the precious box into the museum, till the gardener, summoned in haste, and stimulated by promises, brought a strong arm to work, and only muttered a few remonstrances under his breath. The sudden apparition, however, of a hissing head, full of all nature's fiercest enmity, was too much for even his courage, and he fled with a howl, louder than that of the womankind, leaving the philosopher to entertain his guest alone. How he contrived to do so was his own secret; enough that he was still engaged in the fascinating task of writing down every fact worth recording in his note-book, and keeping watch meanwhile on each movement of his valuable prisoner, when his bonne, after carefully reconnoitring the ground through the keyhole, informed him, at safe distance, that one of the English ladies must see him directly.

"English or Chinese," growled the naturalist, "it is enough that she is a woman, to make her come and interrupt me when I am most happy! Didn't you say I was busy?"

"I said I was not sure whether you were alive or dead, but in either case you would see mademoiselle, if possible."

"If possible! Since you are so prudent, show her in here. She won't stay long when she sees her natural enemy."

Somewhat appeased by his grim sarcasm, the Doctor returned to his note-book, and did not look round till actually compelled by civility. At the sight of Miss Joseph, who looked ten years older; he rose from his chair and pulled off his velvet cap, as one who had cause to complain of intrusion, but refrained from a sense of dignity.

"I am sorry to trouble you, Dr. Thaddeus," began his visitor, her voice scarcely audible from the dryness of her throat; "but ——you have heard what has happened?"

"Mademoiselle, you may not have heard that, after perils and difficulties innumerable, my valuable specimen has reached me in excellent health and vigour: as you may see for yourself, if you are interested in natural history. Approach, but warily; for its habits, I confess, are as yet a matter of conjecture and analogy."

He motioned her courteously to the box, confident in the imme-

diate effect of the introduction; but his visitor only glanced without appearing to see, mechanically asking, "Is it alive?"

"Yes, indeed, dear lady; and I may say, inconveniently so—for those who are afraid of sudden death. For my own poor part, look you (as your Hamlet says), when I have once put my small collection in order, it will be the same to me how I leave it."

She caught his arm with a gasping sigh, and dropped the word that touches every heart. His manner changed instantly; he took her kindly by the hand.

"Is it so, indeed? Then we should certainly be on the watch, that our matters may be in order; for she was young enough to have laid my grey hairs in the grave."

"Old enough in trouble, Dr. Thaddeus. Yet she lived too long for their patience, and they hurried her out of the world at last: how, I shall never know."

She told her tale, filling up the gaps in her own evidence with that of Mr. Mowatt; and ending with the discovery she had made since his departure, that the deposit commended to her care had vanished. He heard all with great attention; questioned and cross-questioned her till tolerably satisfied that he knew all she could tell; and sat caressing his chin, looking wistfully at his specimen.

"She would have been a valuable assistant, poor child, if I could have trained her. She has the rare gift of taming creatures; a gift only vouchsafed to those who love them. Let her lady-guardian cherish it, for more depends on it than she knows. You have seen the lawyer, you say? He is an honest man—you can trust all necessary matters to him; but for the others —— Come in, there. What is it?" as his gardener's head appeared at the door.

"Telegram just come, sir." He laid the document on the table, and vanished with suspicious alacrity. The naturalist opened the paper, and mused over it a few moments.

"My dear lady," he said to Miss Joseph, "I have not left my poor little pupil entirely to the care of strangers. A trusty friend has charge to keep an eye on the step-father whenever he is in Paris. Touching that missing packet, I have my own opinion, but it will require time to make it clear. With regard to the Professor, you say he was telegraphed to, at his Paris lodging?"

"Mr. Mowatt telegraphed: also to England."

"Dangerfield started for England yesterday."

CHAPTER XII.

MISS WILMOT TAKES A LESSON.

"WHAT is the great news now, Dominie?" asked Sir Marcus, as Lewis Frankland, having shot past the window at the top of his speed, came in to breakfast, the last of the party, in a glow of exercise and animation. The weather, which had so severely tried the visitors at the Court when we saw them last, had changed considerably for the better; the sun was on the snowy head of Comberhoe, and the grass glittered like a sheet of diamonds with the frost.

"Great news, indeed!" said Lewis, and, with a comprehensive greeting round the table, he began at once to make up for lost time upon the good things before him. "Kit's Pond is as firm as this floor, and the air outside perfectly still—I never felt such a morning. If the ladies wish to skate, and want an admiring escort, the hour is come, and the man. Mrs. Bourne, Miss Medlicott, will you muffle yourselves up after breakfast, and take a look at the ice, even if you do not venture to cross it?"

"My dear Mr. Frankland," said Mrs. Bourne, before Miss Medlicott could do more than shiver, "I am sure you are very kind—I did go to Regent's Park once—you remember, Nicholas, my dear? —and they said people tried to drown themselves because of the hot brandy-and-water. So shocking, you know: one would rather give them a shilling to drink it at home. I could not bear to encourage anything so sad."

"I assure you, Mrs. Bourne, I never got drowned on anything stronger than barley-water; and that was in the Christmas holidays, more years ago than Miss Combermere or I choose to confess. She will bear me witness, for I believe she made it herself."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Bourne, "it is a very difficult thing to make properly. Poor dear Miss Medlicott never complains, but I know there was something wrong in hers last night, though I put two good glasses of sherry into it. So kind of you, Kate, my love, to send up the wine. I did wish Cecilia Wilmot would have tried ——"

"Dear Mrs. Bourne," interrupted that young lady, "are you not aware that all those soothing beverages make me, who am sweetness itself by nature, almost irritable? Nothing short of drowning would induce me to take them. And if Mr. Frankland is really going to perform on Kit's Pond, wherever that may be, I must ask if he takes pupils?"

"If any lady wishes for a coach, not to say a sledge, I am open to offers," laughed Lewis. "Archdale, shall you come to give us the benefit of your criticism?"

"No, thank you; I can imagine it all. I never could help pitying the shivering spectators on the bank."

"But here is Miss Wilmot going to take a lesson in the art; you will like to see how her natural genius can triumph over difficulties?"

"I have seen that so successfully done already, that I can believe it without looking on."

Cecilia bit her rosy lip. "Mr. Archdale is too merciful to laugh at an awkward beginner; but here is Miss Granard, who no doubt is a proficient in all that becomes a woman. Will she not be of the party?"

Adela Granard, confessed to having learned to skate abroad, but declined it for that morning; and Cecilia thought a look of intelligence passed between her and Ernest. Cecilia rose from the breakfast-table, declaring she must go and prepare for the worst; and, with the vague idea of solacing her own feelings by making somebody else uncomfortable, turned on poor Mrs. Bourne.

"If I should not return, ma'am, you will find my last wishes on my dressing-table."

"Oh, my dear, pray don't ——"

"Pray don't *you* trouble yourself about them, Mrs. Bourne," interposed Sir Marcus: "we know what they are—a figure of eight—with as many ciphers after it as possible. Is not that about the mark, Bourne, according to your experience?"

"According to my experience, a lady on the ice is sure to cut a pretty figure, whether she wishes it or not," growled that gentleman: and, under cover of the general laugh, Cecilia effected her escape.

When she reappeared, it was in the most becoming costume for the exercise that ingenuity could devise. Mrs. Archdale remarked that she did not look like a novice.

"I suspect you know a great deal more than you would have us believe," she said, with a kind smile that seemed to touch the young lady's heart. She pressed the widow's hand in hers, and whispered:

"If you knew more, you would wonder I had the courage to go anywhere." Then, without allowing time for an answer, she hurried on, calling to Lewis with a pretty impatience that brought him laughing to her side.

"I have been coaxing our hostess to lend you her pet skates, which she keeps locked up in chamois leather, and never wears."

"Will Kate not join us, then?" asked Cecilia, with an air of innocent surprise.

"Oh no! She has too much on her hands this morning to be thinking about her feet."

What this might mean, Miss Wilmot could not surmise; but she let it pass. Mr. Frankland seemed to be entirely absorbed in the object of their expedition, about which Cecilia professed a great deal more interest than was genuine. But this, unhappily, was nothing new in her career.

If her intention had been to pique Ernest's jealousy, to win a triumph over Kate, and to solace her own sore feelings all at once, by fascinating Lewis Frankland, she soon found that nothing short of

being in earnest would keep up her credit in the latter's eyes; and that if she came out to learn skating, it was no use dawdling about to talk of other things. She might be a little cowardly, and that only made him more kind and encouraging; but indifference to improvement would very soon have sent him home again.

Kit's Pond being a favourite resort of the neighbourhood, though actually Sir Marcus's property, was too public for tuition, and Cecilia was conducted to a retired part of the grounds, where a small shallow pool presented as safe a surface as could well be desired. Mr. Frankland was unwearied in his patience and good-humour; but he was evidently so much more bent upon making her learn than in admiring her graceful awkwardness, that she was obliged to take pains and mind what she was about, and this became intolerable in her irritated state of mind. She was fain, at last, to plead fatigue, and proposed walking on to Kit's Pond, that she might see some real skating, and try and learn by looking on. A brisk walk would do her good; she was getting thoroughly chilled.

He slung her skates with his own across his shoulder, and reproached himself for forgetting she was not hardened to northern cold as he was.

"Ah!" she said, as they went through the silent woods, the dry leaves, made beautiful with sparkling silver, crackling and rustling at every step, and the air so pure and fresh that every breath you drew seemed another moment added to your life instead of taken away—"if you had only kept your word, and made me an Esquimaux hut in the snow, I should have been acclimatised by this time, and have done you more credit."

"When the snow was only deep enough to bury you, what could I do?"

"Pure invention to cover idleness, Mr. Frankland! I know all you would have had to do. Just dig so many feet downwards, and so many horizontally, throwing out the snow with your spade—smooth the roof with your head—line it all with skins—make your wife light the lamp, and keep the pot boiling—and there you are!"

"There I am not, by any means: having no wife to keep the pot boiling, and nothing for her to boil if I had."

"And no friends in the tribe to keep you from starving?"

"Better friends could not be. But, except in the holidays, I have a fancy the bread you earn is sweeter than the cake that is given you. Especially if you want to share it with somebody else."

"I admire your spirit, though such independence is rare. Then are you actually digging out your house after all by sheer labour—looking forward as a reward to the dignity of the lamp and kettle? It must give an interest to your life which others might envy you," added Cecilia.

He looked at her as if to see if she were in earnest. "*You* cannot want interest in yours—so bright and pleasant as it must be?"

"Oh, *mine!* I was not thinking of myself," she returned, with an emphasis which he might interpret as he pleased. "I could not help feeling how much better your friend Mr. Archdale would be for some stimulus of the kind, to shake him out of his invalid ways."

"He has had shaking enough, poor fellow, if that would do it. I am afraid he will have to give up the army."

"What, in consequence of his accident?"

"I fancy so. Sir Marcus is no croaker, but I see he has strong doubts of his being again fit for active service: and Archdale is not a fellow to shirk duty, if it has to be done. I wish he would take to my line—I should like nothing better than to have him for a colleague."

"But, if he does retire he need not work for a living?"

"If he wants to set up a kettle and lamp he must, I suppose."

Another turn brought them to the smooth sheet of ice which bore the name of Kit's Pond, though no antiquarian had ever satisfactorily answered the query who Kit was. It wound in and out the wooded banks, and the point they had reached, being the farthest from the town, seemed sufficiently solitary for the most nervous of beginners. Cecilia, however, resisted all persuasion—only urged her companion to give her the best lesson possible by showing how the thing ought to be done.

"I shall walk along the bank, and admire you with comfort," she said. "Unless I am comfortable I never admire anybody or anything."

He was reluctant to leave her alone, which she laughed at, and he was soon darting along the polished surface with a skill rarely equalled. Miss Wilmot had no attention to give him. Her eyes were blinded with tears; her heart was throbbing with anger and sorrow. How was it that Ernest Archdale, once lightly prized, had seated himself so firmly on her bosom's throne that all his own coldness, and all her womanly pride, could not overthrow it? If she had, indeed, injured his prospects and ruined his health, why did this make her long to win back the power of compensation, and through forgiveness regain the devotion she had thrown away? What did Lewis Frankland mean by that last hint? Was it true, what her own misgivings had told her, that not only was she rejected, but another already preferred? She would not, could not believe it; and Lewis's own peace should be thrown into the scale before the point was yielded—peace of which he seemed so careless, that it was just possible he was unaware of its being in danger. She had turned to watch his progress, and wave a sympathising hand, when the cracking of dried sticks behind her was followed by a voice, respectfully asking if she had not dropped her veil.

The speaker was a well-made stranger, buttoned up to the throat in a coat lined with handsome fur, which turned over the collar and cuffs. The veil, which he offered with a polite bow, had fallen unnoticed from her hat. She accepted it with thanks: and, while a

few words were exchanged about the beauty of the morning, she could not help imagining she had seen the face before. The deep, though guarded admiration which he threw into his eyes, as they met hers, almost daunted her. He seemed to read the unspoken question, and replied to it with a smile—that though he had the honour of knowing Miss Wilmot by sight, he could not expect her to know him.

"Since you know my name, then," said she, blushing, but more curious than displeased, "may I ask yours?"

"My name," he said, "may not be quite strange to you. It is Dangerfield."

Cecilia started. The Professor—of whose séances and mysterious powers people spoke so much—could this be the same man? He bowed, but asked with a gravity that impressed her more than she liked to acknowledge, what she might have heard of his powers.

"Oh, that you can call spirits from the vasty deep, and that they come when you call them, and so forth," was the light reply.

"Take care," he said, quietly: "it is not always necessary to call those who are so near."

The eyes which had glowed a minute before were now fixed upon her with a keenness that, with all her high spirit, sent a shiver through her veins. She looked hurriedly round for Lewis.

"Mr. Frankland is busy at this moment, helping a boy who has slipped down," said her strange companion; and his voice, though perfectly courteous, seemed to have assumed somewhat of authority. "It was not of him that Miss Wilmot was thinking when she threw back the veil that hid a face for which men have risked life and limb."

"What *do* you mean, Professor Dangerfield?"

She knew what he meant too well; but in the strange alarm that was gaining upon her, she hardly heeded what she said. Without noticing the question, he continued to look at her steadily: just as a philosopher might contemplate a new mineral he was desirous to analyse.

"When and where I have seen Miss Wilmot," he said, "matter little at present. That I know more of her than she imagines, I could prove, if she had the courage to desire it."

She tried to laugh. "I shall begin to think you are really a soothsayer, Mr. Dangerfield, and that you want to try my nerves. But this should be done in the witching hour of night: or, at least, in a well darkened room, if you wish me to become a believer."

He "held her with his glittering eye:" and for the first time in her life she understood the meaning of the line.

"*Shall* I tell you?" he asked, and his voice seemed to thrill through every nerve. Half-frightened, half angry, she petulantly replied that he could do as he pleased—there was nothing for him to tell that she knew of.

His answer was not a very long one. It was given in a whisper, and it sent the passionate blood surging to her brow.

"Who dares to say so? Who can be so wicked as to tell such untruths. Let me pass, sir! I am going home—Mr. Frankland will follow me directly."

The Professor lifted his hat again, and drew back for her to pass. Before she had gone many yards, however, she found her strange acquaintance by her side.

"I think, sir," she said, with all the dignity at her command, "you did not understand that I wish to be alone."

"You are *not* alone," was his answer. "That is why I am here."

The luncheon was on the table, and Mrs. Bourne and Miss Medlicott were in the dining-room, waiting for Kate Combemere; who, strange to say, was unpunctual and came in from a walk, rather breathless with haste, just as Cecilia reached the house.

"Oh, come," said Miss Combermere, to her as they entered together, "I am not the last, at any rate. Where is Lewis?"

"I left him on the ice—I was cold and tired," answered Cecilia.

"You look quite starved. I begin to think Mrs. Bourne is right: that skating means hot brandy-and-water. You have not been drowning, I hope, to earn it?"

"I am not sure; I have been in another world, I think—but not a better one. Does it ever seem to you that everybody is going mad?"

A vague suspicion crossed Kate's mind that this referred to Lewis. It seemed so unlike him to have allowed her to walk home alone!

"To tell you the truth, Miss Wilmot, I fear we shall find a few symptoms of madness in the dining-room if we keep our friends waiting longer. A little hot soup and a glass of port wine will bring back your colour; but Lewis will not hear the last of this for many a day."

"Indeed, it was no fault of his—I am not used to this climate. And that reminds me—Paul!" as the boy was passing to the offices, "I dropped my shawl somewhere near the large beech-tree, and I am afraid of its being spoiled. Would you run and find it for me?"

"Certainly, ma'am," said Paul, delighted to have a scamper across the grass, and away he went. Kate hurried her shivering guest into the dining-room, and plied her with restoratives.

She could not help observing how subdued the young lady appeared, and with what apparent meekness she endured all the kind scolding, and offers of remedies, showered upon her by Mrs. Bourne. Something must have happened to produce such an effect on her temperament; and until Lewis came back, Kate could not be easy. One look, one word from him would be enough, but that she must have. It seemed, too, that Cecilia was on the listen, starting every time the door opened, and hardly attending sufficiently to any question

to give an appropriate answer. The luncheon was nearly over when she volunteered a remark that it was a day of general unpunctuality, for Miss Granard and Emily had not yet appeared.

"Don't you know, then——" began Mr. Bourne, but stopped short, seeing her eyes wander as the door opened and Paul entered, carrying her shawl in his hand. The boy's face was flushed, and in passing his master's chair, he dropped a whisper in his ear. Cecilia saw a fierce light kindle in the young officer's eye, as he looked up enquiringly and exchanged a glance with Sir Marcus. Her heart beat so fast she could hardly breathe. Sir Marcus, turning quietly to Mrs. Bourne, asked if she would take anything more, and on her declining, laid down his knife and fork, pushed back his chair, and spoke.

"Archdale, I want you for one moment, and your boy too. Don't wait for Lewis, Kate; Stephens will look after him. The ladies will be warmer in the drawing-room."

Kate, who knew the meaning of every tone of her father's voice, obeyed the implied order at once. She was certain he had a reason, and that was enough; the next thing was to prevent other people from finding it out. As they passed on to the drawing-room, she offered her arm to Cecilia, and was dismayed to find her trembling from head to foot. The vague doubt Kate had felt before returned, and with it a sudden pang of terror that something had happened which she was not to know.

"Tell me," she said, in a choked whisper, as they stood a moment in the doorway, "are you hiding any misery from me? It may be meant as kindness, but I call it cruel. Whatever it is, tell it me at once."

The door-bell rang; Cecilia clung tighter to her arm. When the hold relaxed, Miss Combermere had only time to place her on the sofa before she fainted.

Mrs. Archdale came to Kate's assistance. "Go and call your father, my dear; I can attend to her. Poor, sweet girl! She has had some shock to her nerves. You were quite right, Mrs. Bourne, in your advice: but you had better attend to Miss Medlicott; she looks quite frightened, and we shall have her fainting too."

Kate went in quest of Sir Marcus, and met Ernest Archdale in the hall. He stopped her from going further.

"I only want my father," she cried, impatiently; "you are all so full of mystery, I am nearly at my wits' end. I know you are keeping something from me—what is it?"

"Nothing is kept from *you*, Miss Combermere. But," dropping his voice, "you were only just in time. That man is here."

"*Here?* And you have let him in?"

"Paul brought word that he was coming, and he has been shown into Sir Marcus's study. We can safely trust him there."

Kate drew a long breath. "What can be his object in coming here?"

"No doubt to persuade that poor child to go back with him. Miss Granard ought to be warned directly."

"And here comes one who will do it; only he must have something to eat first," said Kate, joyfully, as Lewis Frankland came in through the offices. She would not for the world have confessed now what her alarm had been, so she only scolded him for forsaking Miss Wilmot, who had come back dead tired, and since luncheon had fainted away. How Ernest received this news she had not time to notice, but Lewis threw a new light on the subject: he had seen Miss Wilmot talking with a stranger, who seemed to follow her home. They began discussing what this could mean.

Sir Marcus received his visitor civilly, but with more formal politeness than he usually showed a guest. He held in his hand the card which the Professor had sent in, and, bowing rather stiffly, begged to be informed in what manner he could serve him.

Cosmo Dangerfield, returning the bow with interest, apologised in set phrases for intruding on Sir Marcus Combermere; but his business was urgent and painful; so urgent, so painful, that he could only throw himself on that gentleman's goodness. To this, Sir Marcus replied by another bow, but neither offered him a chair, nor the slightest assistance in bringing out his errand.

"I am correct, Sir Marcus, am I not, in assuming that one peculiarly dear to me is at this moment a guest under your roof?"

"I have several friends with me at present, sir. To which of them are you so strongly attached?"

"Nay, Sir Marcus, nay! Even professional reserve—often so valuable—can scarcely be maintained here, when you must know that I allude to my wife's only child—the child, sir, of a dying mother, who cannot die in peace without seeing her again. I have yielded to my wife's prayers and entreaties, and left her, ill as she is, taking this journey, that I, at least, may have nothing to reproach myself with."

"And you imagine, sir, that in taking such a journey you escape self-reproach? I have my own opinion on that point, which may be of small importance to you: but I must inform you that you lie under a mistake. Miss Stormount, is not in my house."

"Excuse me, Sir Marcus: I respect your motives; but you cannot expect me to admit this without a word of remonstrance. My duty to a dying wife emboldens me to press your conscience. As a father and as a man whose character stands so high ——"

"As a father, and as an honest man, sir, I am accustomed to speak the truth. Permit me to observe that I am not accustomed, especially in my own house, to have my word doubted. Your motive for coming to fetch your step-daughter rests with yourself: the essential thing for you to know is that she is *not* here."

"Most extraordinary!" cried the crafty Professor. "She was here this morning—*that* I know for certain."

"Whatever you know for certain must be quite satisfactory to you."

"You admit that she was here?"

"If you are certain of the fact, I do not see what more is required."

"Will you tell me where she is—as the honest man you claim to be?"

"I should scarcely be honest if I did. I am not authorised to give her address to anybody."

"Nor Miss Granard's? You will not help me to fulfil a dying woman's wishes?"

"Excuse me—I am fully determined that they shall be fulfilled, if my help can avail to do it. The child was brought to England by her mother's desire, and, as far as I can judge, not an hour too soon. Your system of philosophy, sir, is not exactly adapted for sensitive girls."

"You convict yourself, Sir Marcus! You own to having had her case in your hands."

"Exactly so—I have had it. And it has given me satisfactory reasons for declining any further communication with you."

"I shall learn what I want to know, Sir Marcus, in spite of your discretion; in spite of all, I saw this room—believe it or not, as you please—when I was on the other side of the sea. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in *your* philosophy, however you may scoff at *mine*."

"There is so little of heaven in yours, sir, that it is scarcely worth mentioning. You will do as you please about obtaining the knowledge you want; I object to your selecting my house as the means."

"Then I will relieve you at once, and beg you to accept my apologies for taking up your valuable time."

"My time, sir, could not be better employed. Stephens!"

The butler appeared instantly, and the visitor was bowed out of study and hall—and the door bolted behind him.

"Now, Paul, my lad!" said Sir Marcus, as the boy sprang up from the corner in which he had been concealed. "After him like a beagle, and let us know where he goes."

(*To be continued.*)

LADY JENKINS.

TOD arrived at Lefford. I met him at the train, just as I had met Miss Cattledon—who was with us still. As we walked out of the station together, many a man cast a glance after the tall, fine young fellow—who looked strong enough to move the world; if, like Archimedes, the famous geometrician of Syracuse, he had but possessed the necessary lever.

"Shall you be able to stay a week, Tod?"

"Two weeks if they'd like it, Johnny. How you have picked up, lad!"

"Picked up?"

"In looks. They are all your own again. Glad to see it, old fellow."

Some few days had elapsed since the latest event recorded in this veritable little history—the call that Major Leckie made on Captain Collinson, and found his brother there instead of himself—but no change worth noting to the reader had occurred in the town's politics. Lady Jenkins was ailing as much as ever, and Madame St. Vincent was keeping a sharp watch on the maid, Lettice Lane, without, as yet, detecting her in any evil practices: the soirées were numerous, one being held at some house or another every night in the work-a-day week: and the engagement of Captain Collinson to Miss Belmont was now talked of as an assured fact. Collinson himself had been away from Lefford during these intervening days. Pink, the hair-dresser, thought he had taken a run up to London, on some little matter of business. As to the brother, we had heard no more of him.

But, if Captain Collinson had taken a run up to London, he had unquestionably run down again, though not to Lefford. On the day but one previous to the coming of Tod, Janet and Miss Cattledon went over by train to do some shopping at the county town, which stood fifteen miles from Lefford, I being with them. Turning into a pastrycook's in the middle of the day to get something to eat, we turned in upon Captain Collinson. He sat at the white marble-topped table in the corner of the shop, eating an oyster patty.

"We heard you were in London," said Janet, shaking hands with him, as he rose to offer his seat.

"Got back this morning. Shall be at Lefford to-morrow: perhaps to-night," he answered.

He stood gobbling up his patty quickly. I said something to him, just because the recollection came into my mind, about the visit of his brother.

"My brother!" he exclaimed in answer, staring at me with all his

eyes. "What brother? How do you know anything about my brother?"

"Major Leckie saw him when he called upon you. Saw him instead of you. You had gone to Toome. We took it to be your brother, from the description; he was so like yourself."

The captain smiled. "I forgot that," he said. "We *are* much alike. Ned told me of Leckie's call. A pity I could not see him! Things always happen cross and contrary. Has Leckie left Foxgrove yet?"

"Oh, he left it that same night. I should think he is on his way back to India by this."

"His visit to Lefford seems to have been as flying a one as my brother's was, and *his* did not last a day. How much?"—to the girl behind the counter. "Sixpence? There it is." And, with a general adieu nodded to the rest of us, the captain left the shop.

"I don't like that dandy," spoke Cattledon, in her severest tone. "There's something about him not *true*."

I answered nothing: but I had for a little time now thought the same. And, it may as well be mentioned that Captain Collinson got back to Lefford that same evening, in time to make his appearance at Mrs. Parker's soirée, at which both Miss Belmont and Mina Knox were present.

So now we come to Tod again, and to the day of his arrival. Talking of one thing and another, telling him this and that of the native politics, as we all like to do when a stranger comes to set himself down, however temporarily, amidst us, I mentioned the *familiarity* that in two of the people struck upon my memory. Never did I see this same Captain Collinson, never did I see Madame St. Vincent, or hear them speak, or listen to their laugh, but the feeling that I had met them before—been, so to say, intimate with both one and the other—came forcibly upon me.

"And yet it would seem, upon the face of things, that I never have," I continued to Tod, when telling of this. "Mme. St. Vincent says she never left the South of France until last year; and the captain had been nearly all his life in India."

"You know you do take fancies, Johnny."

"True. But, do not the fancies generally get borne out by the result? Anyway, they both puzzle me: and there's a ring in their voices that ——"

"A ring in their voices!" put in Tod, laughing.

"Say an accent, then: and it sounds, to my ears, unmistakably Worcestershire."

"Johnny, you *are* fanciful!"

I never got anything better from Tod. "You will have the honour of meeting them both here to-night," I said to him, "for it is Janet's turn to give the soirée, and I know they are expected."

Evening came. At six o'clock the first instalment of the guests

knocked at the door; by half-past six the soirée was in full glory: a regular crowd. Everyone seemed to have come, with the exception of the ladies from Jenkins House. Sam Jenkins brought in their excuses.

Sam had run up to Jenkins House with some physic for the butler, who said he had got a surfeit (from drinking too much old ale, Tamlyn thought), and Sam had made use of the opportunity to ask to see his aunt. Madame St. Vincent objected. It would try the dear old lady too much, madame said. She was lying in a sweet sleep on the sofa in her own room; had been quite blithe and lively all day, but was drowsy now; and she had better not be disturbed until bed-time. Perhaps Mr. Sam would kindly make their excuses to Mrs. Arnold Knox.

"Can't you come yourself, madame?" asked Sam, politely. "If Aunt Jenkins is asleep, and means to stay asleep till bed-time, she can't want you."

"I could not think of leaving her, dear Mr. Sam," objected madame. "She looks for me the moment she wakes."

So, Sam, I say, brought back the message. Putting himself into his evening coat as speedily as might be, he came into the room while the tea was going on, and delivered it to Janet as distinctly as the clatter of cups and saucers allowed. You should have seen Cattledon that evening!—in a grey silk gown that stood on end, a gold necklace, and dancing shoes.

"This is the second soirée this week that Lady Jenkins has failed to appear at," spoke Mrs. Knox—not Janet—in a resentful tone. "My firm opinion is, that Mme. St. Vincent keeps her away."

"Keeps her away!" cried Arnold. "Why should she do that?"

"Well, yes; gives way to her fads and fancies about being ill, instead of rousing her out of them. As to *why* she does it," continued Mrs. Knox, "I suppose she is beginning to grow nervous about her. As if an innocent quiet soirée could hurt Lady Jenkins!"

"Johnny," whispered Sam, subsiding into the background after delivering his message, "may I never stir again if I didn't see Collinson hiding in aunt's garden!"

"*Hiding* in your aunt's garden! What was he doing that for?"

"Goodness knows. Did you ever notice a big bay-tree that you pass on the left, between the door and the gate? Well, he was standing behind it. I came out of the house at a double quick pace, knowing I should be late for the soirée, cleared the steps at a leap, and the path to the gate at another. Too quick I suppose for Collinson. He was bending forward to look at the parlour windows, and drew back as I passed."

"Did you speak?"

"No, I came flying on, taking no notice. I daresay he thinks I did not see him. One does not like, you know, to speak to a man who evidently wants to avoid you. But now—I wonder what he

was doing there? Watching Mme. St. Vincent, I should say, through the lace curtains."

To my mind this sounded curious. But that Mina Knox was before my eyes — just at the moment listening to the whispers of Dan Jenkins—I should have thought the captain was looking after her. Or, rather, *not* listening. Mina had a pained, restless look on her face, not in the least natural to it, and kept her head turned away. And the more Dan whispered, the more she turned it from him.

"Here he is, Sam."

Sam looked round at my words, and saw Captain Collinson, then coming in. He was got up to perfection as usual, and wore a white rose in his button-hole. His purple-black hair, beard, whiskers, and moustache were grand; his voice had its ordinary fashionable drawl. I saw Tod—at the opposite side of the room—cease talking with old Tamlyn, to fix his keen eyes on the captain.

"Very sorry to be so late," apologised the captain, bowing over Janet's hand. "Been detained at home writing letters for India. Overland mail goes out to-morrow night."

Sam gave me a knock with his elbow. "What a confounded story!" he whispered. "Wonder what the gallant captain means, Johnny! Wonder what game he is up to?"

It was, I daresay, nearly an hour after this that I came across Tod. He was standing against the wall, laughing slightly to himself, evidently in some glee. Captain Collinson was at the piano opposite, his back to us, turning over the leaves for Caroline Parker, who was singing.

"What are you amused at, Tod?"

"At you, lad. Thinking what a muff you are."

"I always am a muff, I know. But why am I one just now in particular?"

"For not knowing that man," nodding towards Collinson. "I thought I recognised him as he came in; felt sure of him when I heard him speak. Men may disguise their faces almost at will; but not their voices, Johnny."

"Why, who is he?" I asked in surprise.

"I'll tell you when we are alone. I should have known him had we met amid the Hottentots. I thought he was over in Australia; knew he went there."

"But—is he not Captain Collinson?"

Tod laughed. "Just as much as I am, Johnny. Of course he may have assumed the name of Collinson in place of his own: if so, nobody has a right, I take it, to say him nay. But, as to his being a captain in the Bengal cavalry—well, I don't think he is."

"And you say I know him!"

"I say you ought to—but for being a muff. I suppose it is the mass of hair he is adorned with that has thrown you off the scent."

"But, where have I seen him, Tod? Who ——"

"Hush, lad. We may be overheard."

As a general rule, all the guests at these soirées left together. They did so to-night. The last to file out at the door were the Hampshires, with Mrs. Knox, her daughter, and Miss Mack—for Janet had made a point of inviting poor hard-worked, put-upon Macky. Both families lived in the London Road, and would go home in company. Dan had meant to escort Mina, but she pointedly told him he was not wanted, and took the offered arm of Captain Collinson. Upon which, Dan turned back in a huff. Sam laughed at that, and ran after them himself.

How long a time had elapsed afterwards, I hardly know. Perhaps half an hour; perhaps not so much. We had not parted for the night: in fact, Mr. Tamlyn and Tod were still over the game at chess they had begun since supper; which game seemed not in a mood to be finished; I watched it; Dr. Knox and Miss Cattledon stood talking over the fire; while Janet, ever an active housekeeper, was in the supper-room, helping the maids to clear the table. In the midst of this, Charlotte Knox came back, rushing in in a state of intense excitement, with the news that Mina and Captain Collinson were eloping together.

The account she gave was this—though just at first nothing clear could be made out of her. Upon starting, the Hampshires, Mrs. Knox, and Miss Mack, went on in front; Captain Collinson and Mina walked next, and Charlotte fell behind with Sam. Fell very much behind, as it appeared; for when people are talking of what interests them, their steps are apt to linger; and Sam was telling her of having seen Captain Collinson behind the bay-tree. It was a beautiful night, warm and pleasant.

Charlotte and Sam let the captain and Mina get pretty nearly the length of a street before them; and *they*, in their turn, were as much behind the party in advance. Suddenly Sam exclaimed that the captain was taking the wrong way. His good eyes had discerned that, instead of keeping straight on, which was the proper (and only) route to the London Road, he and Mina had turned down the lane leading to the railway station. "Halloa!" he exclaimed to Charlotte, "what's that for?" "They must be dreaming," was Charlotte's laughing reply. "Perhaps the captain wants to take an excursion by a night train?" Whether anything in the last remark, spoken in jest, struck particularly on the mind of Sam, Charlotte did not know: away he started as if he had been shot, Charlotte running after him. Arrived at the lane, Sam saw the other two flying along it, just as if they wanted to catch an engine and had not a minute to do it in. Onward went Sam's long legs in pursuit; but the captain's legs were long also, and he was pulling Mina with him: altogether Sam did not gain much upon them. The half-past eleven o'clock train was then gliding into the station,

where it was timed to halt two minutes. The captain and Mina dashed in; and, when Sam got up, he was putting her into the nearest carriage. Such was Charlotte's statement: and her eyes looked wild, and her breath came in gasps as she made it.

"Have they *gone?*—gone on by the train?" questioned Dr. Knox, who seemed unnaturally calm.

"Goodness, no!" panted the excited Charlotte. "Sam managed to get his arm round Mina's waist, and the captain could not pull her away from him. It was a regular struggle on the platform, Arnold: I was afraid they'd pull her in two. I appealed to the station-master, who stood by, telling him it was my sister, and that she was being kidnapped against her will, and Sam also appealed to him. So he gave the signal when the time was up, and let the train go on."

"Not against her will, I fear," spoke Arnold Knox from between his condemning lips. "Where are they now, Lotty?"

"On the platform, quarrelling; and still struggling which shall keep possession of Mina. I came running here to fetch you, Arnold, and I believe I shall never get my breath back again."

With one accord we all, Cattledon excepted, set off to the station; even old Tamlyn proved he had some go in his legs yet. Tod reached it first: few young men could come up to him at running.

Sam Jenkins had exchanged his hold of Mina for a hold on Captain Collinson. The two were struggling together; but Sam's grasp was firm, and he held him as in a vice. "No, no," he was saying, "you don't escape me, captain, until somebody comes here to take charge of Mina." As to Mina, little simpleton, she cowered in the shade of the corner, shivering and crying. The station-master and the two night porters stood about, gaping and staring.

Tod put his hand on the Captain's shoulder; his other hand momentarily holding back Dr. Knox. "Since when have you been Captain Collinson?" he quietly asked.

The captain turned his angry eyes upon him. "What is that to you?" he retorted. "I am Captain Collinson; that is enough for you."

"Enough for me, and welcome. Not enough, as I judge, for this gentleman here," indicating the doctor. "When I knew you your name was not Collinson."

"How dare you insult me?" hissed the Captain. "My name not Collinson!"

"Not at all," was Tod's equable answer. "It was FABIAN PELL."

II.

THERE are times, even to this day, when it seems to me that I must have been a muff, as Tod said, not to know him. But, some years had elapsed since I saw him; and those years, with their ill-fortune and exposure, and the hard life he had led in Australia, had

served to change him greatly; above all, there was now the disguising mass of hair hiding the greater part of his face. Bit by bit my recollection came to me, and I knew that he was, beyond all shadow of doubt, Fabian Pell.

How long we sat up that night at Mr. Tamlyn's, talking over its events, I cannot precisely tell. For quite the half of what was left of it. Mina, brought to his own home by Arnold for safety, was consigned to Cattledon's charge and bed, and retired to the latter in a state of humiliation and collapse.

The scene on the platform had soon come to a conclusion. With the security of Mina assured by the presence of her brother and the rest of us, Sam let go his hold of the captain. It had been a nice little plot this, that the captain had set afoot in secret, and persuaded that silly girl, not much better than a child, to accede to. They were to have run away to London that night, and been married there the next day; the captain, as was found out later, having already managed to procure a licence. How he would have braved the matter out to Dr. Knox that night, and excused himself, he best knew. Tod applied the checkmate by proclaiming him as Fabian Pell. A lame attempt at denial, which Tod, secure in his assertion, laughed at; a little poor bravado, and Captain Collinson collapsed. Against the truth—that he was Fabian Pell—brought home to him so suddenly and clearly, he could not hold out; the man's hardihood deserted him; and he turned tail and went off the platform, calling back that Mr. Todhetley should hear from him in the morning.

We came away then, bringing Mina. Sam went to escort Charlotte home, where they would have the pleasure of imparting the news to Mrs. Knox, who probably by that time was thinking that Lotty had eloped as well as Mina. And now we were sitting round the fire in old Tamlyn's room, discussing what had happened. Sam came back in the midst of it. Arnold *was* down in the mouth, and no mistake.

"Did you see Mrs. Knox?" he asked of Sam.

"Not to speak to, sir. I saw her through the kitchen window. She was spreading bread-and-jam for Dicky, who had come down in his night-gown and would not be coaxed back to bed."

"What an injudicious woman she is!" put in old Tamlyn. "Enough to ruin the boy."

Perhaps Dr. Knox was thinking, as he sat there, his hand pressed upon his brow, that if she had been a less injudicious woman, a different mother altogether, Mina might not have been in danger of falling into the present escapade: but he said nothing.

"I remember hearing of the notorious break-up of the Clement-Pells at the time it took place," observed old Tamlyn to Tod. "And to think that this man should be one of them!"

"He must carry his impudence about with him," was Tod's remark.

"They ruined hundreds, if not thousands," continued old Tamlyn. "I conclude your people knew all about it?"

"Indeed, yes. We were in the midst of it. My father lost—how much was it, Johnny?"

"Two hundred pounds," I answered; the question bringing vividly back to me our adventures in Boulogne, when the Pater and Mr. Brandon went over there to try to get the money back.

"I suppose," resumed the surgeon, "your father had that much balance lying in their hands, and lost it all?"

"No," said Tod, "he did not bank with them. A day or two before Clement-Pell burst up, he drove to our house as bold as brass, asking my father in the most off-hand manner to let him have a cheque for two hundred pounds until the next day. The Squire did let him have it, without scruple, and of course lost it. He would have let him have two thousand had Pell asked for it."

"But that was a fraud. Pell might have been punished for it."

"I don't know that it was so much of a fraud as many other things Pell did, and might have been punished for," observed Tod. "At any rate, not as great a one. He escaped out of the way, as I daresay you know, sir, and his family escaped with him. It was hard on them. They had been brought up in the greatest possible extravagance, in all kinds of luxury. This one, Fabian, was in the army. He, of course, had to retire. His own debts would have forced that step upon him, apart from the family disgrace."

"Did he re-enter it, I wonder."

Tod laughed. "*I* should say not. He went to Australia. Not above a year ago I heard that he was still there. He must have come back here fortune-hunting; *bread*-hunting; and passed himself off as Captain Collinson the better to do it. Miss Mina Knox's sum of seven thousand pounds was a good prize to fight for."

"That's it!" cried Sam. "Dan has said all along it was the money he was after, dishonourable wretch, not Mina herself. He cares too much for Mme. St. Vincent to care for Mina. How did he get the funds, I wonder, that he has been flourishing about upon?"

"Won them at billiards," suggested Tod.

"No," said Sam, "I don't think that. By all accounts he lost more than he won in the billiard-rooms."

Dr. Knox looked up from a reverie. "Was it himself that Major Leckie saw?—and did he pass himself off as another man to escape detection? Did he go off for the remainder of the week lest the major should look him up again?"

And we knew it must have been so.

Little sleep did I get that night, or rather, morning, for the smaller hours had struck when we went to bed. The association of ideas is a great thing in this world; a help in many a difficult emergency. This association led me from Fabian Pell to his sisters: and the mysterious memory of Mme. St. Vincent that had so puzzled

my mind cleared itself up. As though a veil had been withdrawn from before my eyes, leaving the recollection unclouded and distinct, I saw she was one of those sisters: the eldest of them, Martha Jane. And, let not the reader call me a muff, as Tod again did later, for not having found her out before. When I knew her she was an angular, raw-boned girl, with rather a haggard and very pale face, and nothing to say for herself. Now she was a filled-out woman, her face rounder, her colour healthy, and one of the most talkative and self-possessed I ever listened to. In the old days her hair was reddish and fell in curls: now it was dark, and worn in braids and plaits fashionably incomprehensible. Whether the intervening years had darkened the hair, or whether madame cunningly dyed it, must remain a question.

Dan Jenkins and his brother were right. They no doubt had seen looks of anxious interest given to Mme. St. Vincent by Captain Collinson. Not as a lover, however; they were mistaken there; but as a brother who was living in a state of peril, and whom she was doubtless protecting and trying to aid. But how far had her aid gone? That she kept up the ball, as to his being Captain Collinson, the rich, and honourable, and well-connected Indian officer, went without telling, as the French say; and no one could expect her to proclaim him as Fabian Pell, the swindler; but had she been helping him in his schemes upon Mina? Her display of formal coolness to him must have been put on to mislead the public.

And what was I to do? Must I quietly bury my discovery within me and say nothing? or must I tell Dr. Knox that Madame St. Vincent was no other than Martha Jane Pell? What *ought* I to do? It was that question that kept me awake. Never liking to do harm where I could not do good, I asked myself whether I had any right to ruin her. It might be that she was not able to help herself; that she had done no worse than keep Fabian's secret: it might be that she had wanted him gone just as much as Dan Jenkins had wanted it.

"I'll tell Tod in the morning," was my final conclusion, "and hear what he thinks."

When I got downstairs they were beginning breakfast, and Miss Cattledon was turning from the table to carry up Mina's tea. Mina remained in the depths of tears and contrition, and Cattledon had graciously told her she might lie in bed. Breakfast was taken very late that morning, the result of the previous night's disturbance, and the clock was striking ten when we rose from it.

"Tod, I want to speak to you," I said in his ear. "I want to tell you something."

"All right, lad. Tell away."

"Not here. Won't you come out with me somewhere? We must be alone."

"Then it must wait, Johnny. I am going round to the stables with Tamlyn. He wishes me to see the horse they have got on

trial. By the description, I don't think much of him: should give him a pretty long trial before I bought him."

They went out. Not long after that, I was strolling across the courtyard with Sam Jenkins, who had been despatched on some professional errand, when we saw Sir Henry Westmoreland ride up and rein in his horse. He asked for Dr. Knox. Sam went back to say so, while Sir Henry talked to me.

"Look here," said Sir Henry to the doctor, after they had shaken hands, "I have had a curious letter from Major Leckie this morning. At least"—taking the letter from his pocket and opening it—"it contains an odd bit of news. He says—where is it?—stand still, sir,"—to the horse. "Here it is; just listen, doctor. 'Dr. Knox must have made a mistake in saying Collinson was at Lefford. Collinson is in India; has not been home at all. I have had a letter from him by the overland mail just in, asking me to do a commission for him. Tell Dr. Knox this. If the man he spoke of is passing himself off for Collinson of ours, he must be an impostor.' What do you think of that, doctor?" concluded Sir Henry, folding the letter again.

"He is an impostor," replied Dr. Knox. "We found him out last night."

"What a rogue! Has he been taking people in—been fleecing them?"

"He has taken us all in, Sir Henry, in one sense of the word; he was on the point of doing it more effectually, when he was stopped. As to fleecing people, I don't know about that. He seems to have had plenty of money at his command—whence obtained is another question."

"Cheated somebody out of it; rely upon that," remarked the baronet, as he nodded a good day to us, and rode off.

Mina was downstairs when we returned indoors. Anything more pitiful than her state of contrition and distress I should not care to see. No doubt the discovery, just made, tended to enhance her repentance. In a silly girl's mind some romance might attach to the notion of an elopement with a gallant captain of consideration, brave in Her Majesty's service; but to elope with Mr. Fabian Pell, the chevalier d'industrie, was quite another affair. Mina was mild in temperament, gentle in manners, but she might have flown at the ex-captain's face with frantic nails, had he come in her way.

"I did not really like him," she sobbed forth: and there was no question but she spoke truth. "But they were always on at me, persuading me; they never let me alone."

"Who persuaded you, my dear?" asked Janet.

"He did. He was for ever meeting me in private, and urging me. I could not go out for a walk, or just cross the garden, or run into the next door, but he would be there. Mme. St. Vincent persuaded me. She did not say to me in words, 'you had better do as he

asks you and run away,' but all her counsels tacitly tended to it. She would say to me how happy his wife would be; what a fine position it was for any young lady lucky enough to be chosen by him; and that all the world thought me old enough to marry, though Arnold did not, and for that reason Arnold would do his best to prevent it. And so—and so —"

"And so they persuaded you against your better judgment," added Janet pityingly, as Mina broke down in a burst of sobs.

"There, child, drink that, and don't cry your eyes out," interposed Cattledon, bringing in a beaten-up egg.

Cattledon was coming out uncommonly strong in the way of compassion, all her tartness gone. She certainly did not look with an eye of favour on elopements; but she was ready to take up Mina's cause against the man who deceived her. Cattledon hated the Pells: for Cattledon had been done out of fifty pounds at the time of old Pell's failure, which money she had rashly entrusted to him. She could not well afford to lose it, and she had been bitter on the Pells, one and all, ever since.

That morning was destined to be one of elucidation. Mr. Tamlyn was in the surgery, saying a last word to Dr. Knox before the latter went out to visit his patients, when Lettice Lane marched in. She looked so fresh and innocent that three parts of Tamlyn's suspicions of her melted away.

"Anything amiss at home?" asked he.

"No, sir," replied Lettice, "I have only brought this note"—handing one in. "Mme. St. Vincent told the butler to bring it; but his pains are worse this morning; and, as I chanced to be coming out at the moment, he asked me to leave it here for him."

"Wait an instant," said Mr. Tamlyn, as he opened the note.

It contained nothing of consequence. Mme. St. Vincent had written to say that Lady Jenkins was pretty well, but had finished her medicine: perhaps Mr. Tamlyn would send her some more. Old Tamlyn's injunction to wait an instant had been given in consequence of a sudden resolution he had then come to (as he phrased it in his mind) to "tackle" Lettice.

"Lettice Lane," he began, winking at Dr. Knox, "your mistress's state is giving us concern. She seems to be always asleep."

"She is nearly always dozing off, sir," replied Lettice, her tone and looks open and honest as the day.

"Ay. I can't quite come to the bottom of it," returned old Tamlyn, making believe to be speaking confidentially. "To me, it looks just as though she took—took opiates."

"Opiates, sir?" repeated Lettice, as if she hardly knew how to understand the word: while Dr. Knox, behind the desk, was glancing keenly at her from underneath his compressed eyebrows.

"Opium. Laudanum."

Lettice shook her head. "No sir, my mistress does not take

anything of that, I am sure; we have nothing of the kind in the house. But Mme. St. Vincent is for ever dosing her with brandy-and-water."

"What?" shouted old Tamlyn.

"I have said a long while, sir, that I thought you ought to know it; I've said so to the housemaid. I don't believe an hour hardly passes, day or night, but madame administers to her a small drop of brandy-and-water. Half a wine glass, may be, or a full wine glass, as the case may happen; and sometimes I know it's pretty strong."

"That's it," said Dr. Knox quietly: and a curious smile crossed his face.

Mr. Tamlyn sat down on the stool in consternation. "Brandy-and-water!" he repeated, more than once. "Perpetually dosed with brandy-and-water! And now, Lettice Lane, how is it you have not come here before to tell me of this?"

"I did not come to tell you now, sir," returned Lettice. "Mme. St. Vincent says that Lady Jenkins needs it: she seems to give it her for her good. It is only lately that I have doubted whether it can be right. I have not liked to say anything: servants don't care to interfere. Ten times in a day she will give her these drops of cold brandy-and-water: and I know she gets up for the same purpose once or twice in the night."

"Does Lady Jenkins take it without remonstrance?" asked Dr. Knox, speaking for the first time.

"She does, sir, now. At first she did not. Many a time I have heard her say, 'Do you think so much brandy can be good for me, Patty; I feel so dull after it,' and Mme. St. Vincent has replied to her, that it is the only thing that can get her strength back and bring her round."

"The jade!" spoke Dr. Knox, between his teeth. "And to assure us both that all the old lady took was a drop of it weak twice a day at her meals! Lettice Lane," he added aloud, and there was great sternness in his tone, "you are to blame for not having spoken of this. A little longer silence, and it might have cost your mistress her life." And Lettice went out in contrition.

"What can the woman's motive be, for thus dosing her into stupidity?" spoke the one doctor to the other when they were shut in together.

"*That:* the dosing her into it," said Dr. Knox.

"But the motive, Arnold?—the reason? She must have had a motive."

"That remains to be found out."

It was too true. The culprit was Mme. St. Vincent. She had been administering these constant doses of brandy-and-water for months. Not giving enough at a time to put Lady Jenkins into a state of intoxication; only to reduce her to a chronic state of semi-stupidity.

Tod called me, as I tell you, a muff, and a double muff—first for not knowing Mme. St. Vincent; and next for thinking to screen her. Of course this revelation of Lettice Lane's had put a new complexion upon things. I left the matter with Tod, and he told the doctors at once: Mme. St. Vincent was, or used to be, Martha Jane Pell, own sister to Captain Collinson the false.

III.

QUIETLY knocking at the door of Jenkins House on this same sunshiny morning went three gentlemen: old Tamlyn, Mr. Lawrence, and Joseph Todhetley. Mr. Lawrence was a magistrate and ex-mayor; he had preceded the late Sir Daniel Jenkins in the civic chair, and was intimate with him as a brother. Just as old Tamlyn tackled Lettice, so they were now about to tackle Mme. St. Vincent on the score of the brandy-and-water; and they had deemed it advisable to take Tod with them.

Lady Jenkins was better than usual; rather less stupid. She was seated with madame in the cheerful garden room, its glass doors standing open to the sunshine and the flowers. The visitors were cordially received; it was supposed they had but come to pay a morning visit. Madame St. Vincent sat behind a table in the corner, writing notes of invitation for a soirée, to be held that day week. Tod, who had his wits about him, went straight up to her.

"Ah! how are you?" cried he, holding out his hand. "Surprised to see you here." And she turned white, and stared, uncertain how to take his words, or whether he had really recognised her, and bowed stiffly as to a stranger, and never put out her own hand in answer.

I cannot tell you much about the interview: Tod's account to me was not very clear. Lady Jenkins began talking about Captain Collinson—that he had turned out to be some unworthy man of the name of Pell, and had endeavoured to kidnap poor little Mina. Charlotte Knox imparted the news to her that morning, in defiance of Madame St. Vincent, who had tried to prevent her. Madame said it must be altogether some mistake, and that no doubt Captain Collinson would be able to explain: but she, Lady Jenkins, did not know. After that there was a pause; Lady Jenkins shut her eyes, and madame went on writing her notes.

It was old Tamlyn who opened the ball. He drew his chair nearer the old lady, and spoke out without circumlocution.

"What is this that we hear about your taking so much brandy-and water?"

"Eh?" cried the old lady, opening her eyes. Madame paused in her writing, and looked up. Tamlyn waited for an answer.

"Lady Jenkins does not take much brandy-and-water," cried madame.

"I am speaking to Lady Jenkins, madame," returned old Tamlyn, severely: "be so kind as not to interfere. My dear lady, listen to me—taking her hand; I am come here with your life-long old friend, William Lawrence, to talk to you. We have reason to believe that you continually take, and have taken for some time past, small doses of brandy-and-water. Is it so?"

"Patty gives it me," cried Lady Jenkins, looking first at them and then at Patty, in a helpless kind of manner.

"Just so: we know she does. But, are you aware that brandy-and-water, taken in this way, is so much poison?"

"Tell them, Patty, that you give it me for my good," said the poor lady, in affectionate appeal.

"Yes, it is for your good, dear Lady Jenkins," resentfully affirmed Madame St. Vincent, regarding the company with flashing eyes. "Does any one dare to suppose that I should give Lady Jenkins enough to hurt her? I may be allowed, I presume, as her ladyship's close companion, constantly watching her, to be the best judge of what is proper for her to take."

Well, there ensued a shindy—as Tod called it—all of them talking together, save himself and poor Lady Jenkins: and madame defying everybody and everything. They told her that she could no longer be trusted with Lady Jenkins; that she must go out of the house that day; and when madame defied this with a double defiance, the magistrate intimated that he had come up to enforce the measure if necessary, and he meant to stay there until she was gone.

She saw it was serious then, and the defiant tone changed. "What I have given Lady Jenkins has been for her good," she said; "to do her good. But for being supported by a little brandy-and-water, the system could never have held out after that serious attack she had in Boulogne. I have prolonged her life."

"No, madame, you have been doing your best to shorten her life," corrected old Tamlyn. "A little brandy-and-water, as you term it, might have been good for her while she was recovering her strength, but you have gone beyond the little; you have made her life a perpetual lethargy; you would shortly have killed her. What your motive was, Heaven knows."

"My motive was a kind one," flashed madame. "Out of this house I will not go."

So, upon that, they played the trump card, and informed Lady Jenkins, who was crying softly, that this lady was the sister of the impostor, Collinson. The very helplessness, the utter docility to which the treatment had reduced her, prevented her expressing (and most probably feeling) any dissent. She yielded passively to all, like a child, and told Patty that she must go, as her old friends said so.

A bitter pill for madame to take. But she could not help herself.

"You will be as well as ever in a little time," Tamlyn said to Lady

Jenkins. "You would have died, had this gone on: it must have induced some malady or other from which you could not have rallied."

Madame St. Vincent came out of the house that afternoon, and Cattledon entered it. She had offered herself to Lady Jenkins for a few days in the emergency.

It was, perhaps, curious that I should meet Madame St. Vincent before she left the town. Janet was in trouble over a basket of butter and fowls that had been sent her by one of the country patients, and of which the railway people denied the arrival. I went again to the station in the afternoon to see whether they had news of it: and there, seated on the platform bench, her boxes around her, and waiting for the London train, was madame.

I showed myself as respectful to her as ever, for you can't humiliate fallen people to their faces, telling her, in the pleasantest way I could, that I was sorry things had turned out so. The tone seemed to tell upon her, and she burst into tears. I never saw a woman so subdued in the space of a few hours.

"I have been treated shamefully, Johnny Ludlow," she said, gulping down the sobs. "Day and night for the past nine months have I been about Lady Jenkins, wearing myself out in attendance on her. The poor old lady had learnt to love me and to depend upon me. I was like a daughter to her."

"I daresay," I answered, conveniently ignoring the dosing.

"And what I gave her, I gave her for the best," went on madame. "It *was* for the best. Aged people of seventy years need it. Their nerves and system require to be soothed: to induce sleep now and then must be a blessed boon. It was a boon to her, poor old thing. And this is my recompense!—turned from the house like a dog!"

"It does seem hard."

"Seem! It *is*. I have had nothing but hardships all my life," she continued, lifting her veil to dry away the tears. "Where I am to go now, or how make a living, I know not. They told me I need not apply to Lady Jenkins for references: and ladies won't engage a companion who has none."

"Is your husband really dead?" I ventured to ask.

"My poor husband is really dead, Johnny Ludlow—I don't know why you should imply a doubt of it. He left me nothing: he had nothing to leave. He was only a master in the college at Brétage—a place in the South of France—and he died, I verily believe, of the poor living. We had not been married twelve months. I had a little baby, and that died. Oh, I assure you I have had my troubles."

"How are—Mr. and Mrs. Clement Pell?" I next asked, with hesitation. "And Conny?—and the rest of them?"

"Oh, they were well when I last heard," she answered, slightingly. "I don't hear often. Foreign letters are expensive. Conny was to have come here shortly on a visit."

"Where is Gusty? Is ——"

"I know nothing at all about my brothers," she interrupted sharply. "And this, I suppose, is my train. Good-bye, Johnny Ludlow; you and I at least can part friends. You are always kind. I wish the world was like you."

I saw her into the carriage—first-class—and her boxes into the van. And thus she disappeared from Lefford. And her brother, "Captain Collinson," as we found later, had taken his departure for London by an early morning train, telling little Pink, his landlord, as he paid his week's rent, that he was going up to attend a levée.

It was found that the rumour of his engagement to Miss Belmont was entirely untrue. Miss Belmont was rather indignant about it, freely saying that she was ten years his senior. He had never hinted at such a thing to her, and she should have stopped him if he had. We concluded that the report had been set afloat by himself, to take attention from his pursuit of Mina Knox.

Madame St. Vincent had feathered her nest. As the days went on, and Lady Jenkins grew clearer, better able to see a little into matters, she could not at all account for the money that had been drawn from the bank. Cheque after cheque had been presented and cashed; and not one tenth of the money could have been spent upon home expenses. Lady Jenkins had been always signing cheques; she remembered that much; never so much as asking, in her abnegation of will, what they were needed for. "I want a cheque to-day, dear Lady Jenkins," her companion would say, producing the cheque-book from her desk; and Lady Jenkins would docilely sign it. That a large portion of the proceeds had found their way to Mr. Fabian Pell was looked upon as a certainty.

And hence, the obtaining of this money, might be traced the motive for the dosing of Lady Jenkins. Once let her intellect become clear, her will re-assert itself, and the golden game would be stopped. Madame St. Vincent had also another scheme in her head—for the past month or two she had been trying to persuade Lady Jenkins to make a codicil to her will, leaving her a few thousand pounds. Lady Jenkins might have fallen blindly into that; but they had not as yet been able to agree upon the details: Madame St. Vincent urging that a lawyer should be called in from a distance; Lady Jenkins clinging to old Belford. That this codicil would have been made in time, and by the strange lawyer, there existed no manner of doubt.

Ah, well: it was a deep-laid plot altogether. And my visit to Lefford, with Tod's later one, had served, under Heaven, to frustrate it.

Lady Jenkins got rapidly better, now that she was no longer drugged. In a few days she was herself again. Cattledon came out amazingly strong in the way of care and kindness, and was gracious to everybody, even to Lettice.

"She always forbade me to say that I took the brandy-and-water," Lady Jenkins said to me one day when I was sitting with her under the laburnum tree on her lawn, talking of the past, her bright green silk dress and pink cap ribbons shining in the sun. "She made my will hers. In other respects she was as kind as she could be to me."

"That must have been part of her plan," I answered. "It was the great kindness that won you to her. After that, she took care that you should have no will."

"And the poor thing might have been so happy with me had she only chosen to be straightforward, and not try to play tricks! I gave her a handsome salary, and new gowns besides; and I don't suppose I should have forgotten her at my death."

"Well, it is all over, dear Lady Jenkins; and you will be just as hearty and brisk as you used to be."

"Not quite that, Johnny," she said, shaking her head; "I cannot expect that. At seventy, grim old age is laying its hand upon us. What we need then, my dear," she added, turning her kindly blue eyes upon me, in which the tears were gathering, "is to go to the mill to be ground young again. And that is a mill that does not exist in this world."

"Ah no!"

"I thank God for the mercy He has shown me," she continued, the tears trickling down her cheeks. "I might have gone to the grave in the half-witted state to which I was reduced. And, Johnny, I often wonder, as I lie awake at night thinking, whether I should have been held responsible for it."

The first use Lady Jenkins made of her liberty, was to invite all her relations, the young nephews and nieces, up to dinner, as she used to do. Madame St. Vincent had set her face against these family entertainments, and they had fallen through. The ex-mayor, William Lawrence, and his good old wife, made part of the company, as did Dr. Knox and Janet. Lady Jenkins beamed on them once more from her place at the head of the table, and Tamlyn sat at the foot and served the big plum-pudding.

"Never more, I trust, shall I be estranged from you, my dears, until it pleases Heaven to bring about the final estrangement," she said to the young people, when they were leaving. And she gave them all a sovereign a-piece.

Cattledon could not remain on for ever. Miss Deveen wanted her: so Mina Knox went to stay at Jenkins House, until a suitable lady should be found to replace Madame St. Vincent. Upon that, Dan Jenkins was taken with an anxious solicitude for his aunt's health, and was for ever finding his way up to enquire after it.

"You will never care to notice me again, Dan," Mina said to him, with a swelling heart and throat, one day when he was tilting himself by her on the arm of the sofa.

"Shan't I!" returned Dan.

"Oh, I am so ashamed of my folly; I feel more ashamed of it, day by day," cried Mina, bursting into tears. "I shall never, never get over the mortification."

"Won't you!" added Dan.

"And I never liked him much: I think I *dis*-liked him. At first I did dislike him; only he kept saying how fond he was of me; and Mme. St. Vincent was always praising him up. And you know he was all the fashion."

"Quite so," assented Dan.

"Don't you think it would be almost as well if I were dead, Dan—for all the use I am likely to be of to any one?"

"Almost, perhaps; not quite," laughed Dan; and he suddenly stooped and kissed her.

That's all. And now, at the time I write this, Dan Jenkins is a flourishing lawyer at Lefford, and Mina is his wife. Little feet totter up and down the staircase and along the passages that good old Lady Jenkins used to tread. She treads them no more. There was no mill to grind her young again here; but she is gone to that better land where such mills are not needed.

Her will was a just one. She left her property between her nephews and nieces; a substantial sum to each of them. Dan had Jenkins House in addition. But it is no longer Jenkins House; for he had that name taken off the entrance pillars forthwith, replacing it with the one that had been there before—Rose Bank.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.

A REVERIE.

"In maiden meditation."

I lean towards ye, stars that shine and flee,
Kindling the dark above:
I stretch wide arms, that gleam across the sea,
And ask the nightingale, and ask of ye,
O waves that wander free!
Of a great mystery shut up from me—
Creation's mystery, Love!

How cometh he? The sun
Shines on the rose's petals whitely rolled,
Shut closely, fold on fold,
Till blushes crimson, and the leaf-buds part
To the warm breathing of her fragrant heart:
Is sunshine like to love? the lover's art,
Great as the sun's to give or to withhold
The loveliness he praises? might I be
Beloved and lovely, should love look on me?

Wears he the form of eagle or of dove?
Drives he his chariot o'er a darken'd sea
With flame and thunder drest?
Or smiles he from a fair cloud's downy breast
Wind-speeded to the west,
A cloud with heaven's roses on its breast?

Or sails he with the birds across the seas
In the dim shadow of our island trees
To build a nest?
A bird that keeps in memory year by year
The one green covert dear!
So constant he, and true of memory?
Or rises he from grasses at full height
As moth-wings flash from thistledown—a slight
And blue-eyed boy, bearing a lily crown
And lily wand? Alas! for then I might
So meeting him amid the languid light,
Where summer meadows twinkle to the heat,
Mistake him for a playmate mild and sweet,
And follow him for many a sultry mile,
Till lips forget to smile
And limbs are weak.
Is love so meek, and crafty to beguile,
While evermore the homeward pathway seems
Like a friend's face familiar to our dreams,
Near to—yet far to seek?

Or doth he sing
With birds of leafy spring,
That call their mates down from the happy skies,
With sacrifice
Of strong-winged liberty, and joy secure
To labour and endure,

To crouch beneath a shadow that deceives,
A sunbeam lifts, and light airs blow apart,
To lay up treasure in the grass and leaves,
With faint unquiet heart :—
To rest unrestfully, beneath the moon
And ever lingering suns of sultry June,
Lulled by a pleasant tune,
A hope unsure?
Shall love so sing to me, and I give ear
And make a home, and lay up treasure here
Where now I lonely move?
Shall I, too, listen, casting away fear,
At the sweet call of love?

What voice hath he
That hearing I may flee
If so he sing to me?
The blowing of the fitful summer wind
Nurses the new-born fruit within the flower
Whose April bloom it shed :
It whispers in the pine-boughs, and the doves,
Whose cherish'd nest was rifled yesterday,
Whose young have dyed the mosses with their blood,
Shedding their tender plumage to the breeze,
Make soft low answer, wooing at their ease,
And build anew within the dusky trees
Whose fragrant branches cradle to betray :—
Is the wind's voice like love's? with softest breath
Kindling new life in death,
Inviting to new joy, when joy is dead?
Then is love strong :
O world so full of blandishment and wrong.
O world of love! my feet delay to tread
Your mystic bowers :
I stand apart, and hear the ceaseless song
Of "love, love, love,"—yet pain and death are powers,
And the dark places of the earth are red
With cruelty :—But love is strong to shed
Fruit where our lips have fed
On poisons,—flowers where a heart has bled,
Fresh flowers above the dead!

I cannot see his face, or touch his hand
Here, in the starlit darkness where I stand
And lean from out this sea-girt balcony :
Can it be *he* whose whisper in my ears
Drowning the festive harmony, has sent
Me from rejoicing friends in discontent,
As blinded by my tears, I stand apart,
And listen to the murmur of the sea—
And of my heart?

C. M. Gemmer.

ROBERT DICK, THE THURSO NATURALIST.

FEW visitors to the lovely scenery of Alloa and the Bridge of Allan are likely to make a pilgrimage to Tullibody, even if they are aware that it was the birthplace not only of one of Nature's gentlemen, but of one of the most deeply-read and highly-cultured scientific geniuses who ever saw daylight on either side of the Tweed.

Yet the village merits a visit for its own sake, nestled, as it is, beneath the shadow of the Ochil hills, with the silver Devon meandering in the vale below, and the heights of Dummyat and Buccleuch within reach, whence can be seen the windings of the Forth, the Abbey Craig, the Campsie Fells, and the castles of Stirling and Edinburgh in the dim, far distance.

The "poetic child," born and bred in this out-of-the-way nook, and who never had the chance of straying beyond the bounds of his native Caledonia, or even of investigating the half of her brown heaths and shaggy woods, was Robert Dick, botanist, geologist, and baker, the friend and coadjutor of Hugh Miller; of whom Sir Roderick Murchison once told the assembled members of the British Association that "this distinguished man was able to instruct the Director-General of the Geographical Society, and might well have been a professed ornament of Section D (Zoology and Botany)."

Robert Dick was born in 1810, and left motherless almost in infancy. Having received something more than the elements of a liberal education at one of those Scottish parish schools which have turned out so many sound, thoughtful scholars, his hopes of University and professional life were quenched when his father, an Excise officer, burdened with another brood of bairns, apprenticed him, at thirteen years of age, to the prosaic trade of the Tullibody baker. He had, however, found the second Mrs. Dick so stern a stepmother that the new life was liberty to him. He had to get up at three in the morning, light the oven fire, help to prepare the dough for the day's baking, "set" it in, draw it out, serve customers, sweep the shop, and clean the bakehouse. Yet he managed so to perform his duties and demean himself towards his master and mistress as to gain their kindly regard and respect, and the warm affection of their children, for whom he collected many little treasures, besides bringing them posies of way-side flowers and pockets full of hazel nuts.

When strong enough to carry a heavy bread-basket on his head, and old enough to be trusted so far from home, he was sent to deliver loaves in the neighbouring villages, such as Menstrie, Blairlogie, and the Bridge of Allan; and it was on these journeys that Nature took him by the hand and began to show him her secrets.

He watched the leaves as they grew, and the buds as they swelled out and burst into blossom, learned to know their habits and their favourite nooks and corners, and made them his familiar friends.

He had no money to spend in books, for he received no wages, but only bed and board in return for his services. His father had to clothe him, while the step-mother provided for his washing, and was decidedly sparing in her quantum of clean clothes. But in spite of his hard work and few opportunities, he contrived to pick up knowledge, as people who love it always do. There were no science primers nor cheap books in those days, but he borrowed some volumes of the old Edinburgh Encyclopædia, and studied them in good earnest. By their means he found out the names of his beloved plants, and a little about their orders, genera, and species. Love, the great teacher, and a habit of patient and pains-taking observation filled up all gaps, and helped him to supply the connecting links between one and another.

At seventeen his apprenticeship was over; his family had removed to Thurso, in the extreme north of Scotland, and he had to choose his own course and "fend" for himself. A packet-boat plied betwixt Alloa and Leith. By it Robert Dick went thither, and soon found a situation as journeyman, which he gave up after a six months' trial, and made his way to Glasgow, and afterwards to Greenock.

He made no friends and few acquaintances, and after a three years' exile from the hills and dales and universal face of Nature, wrote and told his father that work was heavy and wages small, and he saw no prospect of improving his position. The parent's answer told him that in the whole county of Caithness there were only three bakers' shops: one at Thurso, one at Wick, and another at Castleton; and that as the first-named town was a thriving and increasing place, there was room for competition.

So Robert Dick set his face northward, and journeyed to the desolate Scandinavian county, which was thenceforth to be his home and the scene of his life labours.

A shop was taken for him in Wilson's Lane, nearly opposite his father's house: but an oven had to be built before he could commence business. Meanwhile he took holiday, wandered on the sea shore, and made acquaintance with its wonders. Strange bits of flotsam and jetsam are washed up on the western Scottish and Norwegian coasts: tropical seaweeds, West Indian nuts and seeds, drift-wood from Honduras and Campeachy Bay, are brought by the Gulf Stream and deposited on the bleak stones: from whence the ocean stretches wide and uninterrupted till it washes the shores of Labrador.

Caithness is altogether a wind-swept, barren land, almost entirely bare of trees, and sloping upwards from the sea to the hills and mountains which divide it from Sutherlandshire. So few and bad were the roads, or rather tracks, a century ago that there was not a single wheeled cart in the whole county, and traffic was carried on

by means of files of pack-horses, the reminiscence of which may here and there be seen in the antiquated signboard of a solitary inn. But the salmon swim by thousands up the Thurso river, the billows break in savage grandeur on its shore; the old red sandstone cliffs raise rugged, hoary heads above the water, and the heather blooms profusely in its season. Robert Dick revelled in them all, and especially in the sea, in whose changing aspects and varying voices he found the sense of companionship he never sought for among his own species.

Most of his neighbours lived on oatmeal porridge, oatcakes, and barley bannocks of home manufacture, and rarely indulged in bakers' bread, unless it were a loaf bought on Saturday for the Sunday's eating. But still there was a little needed every day, and as that little was made by the tradesman's own hands, and disposed of over his counter on the principle of small profits and quick returns, but little capital was required. Therefore a man who had but few personal wants, and no one dependent on him, made a living where many others would have starved.

Dick had no idea of dealing with strangers or finding what was the cheapest market to buy in, being probably deficient in the quality usually called business. But he had a notion of keeping up a kindly commerce with the master under whose roof his years of apprenticeship had been passed. He ordered his bags of flour from him at Tullibody: and was not only allowed a certain amount of credit, but favoured with the elder baker's recipes for biscuit making, and sundry letters in which the latter intimated that he had daughters to marry, one or other of whom might not be inclined to turn a deaf ear to the wooing of her childhood's friend and playmate. A Greenock acquaintance wrote to him in the same strain, but the young man knew his own mind and went courting in his own fashion. His inamorata refused him, so he engaged a Highland woman as his housekeeper, who served him faithfully to his life's end. Like not a few other intellectual men, he espoused his favourite pursuits with his whole soul and found them all-sufficing.

When the day's bread was baked, Robert's time was at his own disposal till it was time to set the sponge, heat the oven, and prepare another batch: operations that were conducted in the small hours of the morning while the rest of the world was still asleep. Thus he had all the daylight free to prosecute his researches and seek the lore he loved. Along the Thurso beach he collected shells by the score and arranged them in a cabinet, losing no opportunity of learning all he could about them.

As he wandered by the sea-worn cliffs, his keen eyes detected the scales of fossil fish and even their heads, fins, and tails imbedded in the stone, and he satisfied himself that—to use his own expression—the very "walls of Thurso were built of dead fish." He studied phrenology as far as he could, but relinquished it for more practical things; borrowed all the books he could get on astronomy, but had

no telescope to use, and therefore fell back from the distant wonders of the starry heavens to the nearer ones of earth, whose mysteries seemed to unveil themselves before his seeing eyes.

When about twenty-five years old he began to make an entomological collection, and worked so hard at it that in nine months he had collected specimens of every insect that has its home in Caithness. Not satisfied with the information he could obtain in other ways, he tried to follow all the processes through which these creatures go in progressing towards their final development, searching out the grubs, and watching the larvæ and chrysalises until the winged flies made their appearance.

Meanwhile he was prospering in his trade and acquiring quite a reputation for biscuits and "parliament." So, after satisfying all his modest personal requirements, he had money to spare, which he spent in books. He now ordered his flour from Leith, and commissioned the merchant with whom he dealt to buy him the volumes for which his soul craved. That worthy procured for him at various times the Gardeners' Dictionary, Floragraphia Britannica, Hogarth's works, illustrated books on botany, conchology, and geology, and also a powerful and expensive microscope.

His botanical excursions were mostly made alone, with a little store of ship biscuits in his pocket, and a pair of thick hob-nailed boots on his feet. He always soaked his stockings in water, and when he came to a burn soaked them again. He mapped out Caithness into districts and resolved to examine each of them in turn for its own particular flora. So he visited every plant in its own home, wandered about the Reay hills in quest of ferns, up the river banks for grasses, to a mountain top for a single plant of white heather, and over the moors for mosses.

This is what he says of the plants native to the bare county he explored :—

"People in the south think that, as Caithness is so far north, its flora must differ greatly from that in their own neighbourhood. No doubt the general aspect of a district in the south differs very strikingly in its prominent features. And yet, after all, we have very few plants that may not also be found in the south. The Caithness flora is not alpine—not even sub-alpine. I know of only three Baltic plants in Caithness ; and of these only one is a rarity. Indeed it is peculiar to Caithness ; for Caithness is the only British district in which it grows. We have the Baltic rush by the river side. But then *Juncus balticus* grows at Barry Sands, near Dundee. Last summer I was much pleased to meet the Baltic rush growing in a small marsh about six miles inland. I was highly delighted. I had never seen it so far from the sea."

Eighteen miles away from home he found a plant or two of the rue-leaved spleenwort, and every year he walked all that distance to visit the little fern and see how it fared. On the banks of the river

he discovered the *Hierochloë borealis*, or Northern Holy Grass: the beautiful spiral-stemmed, golden-seeded, sweet-scented plant with which the Swedish and Norwegian churches are strewn in summer time. Later in life he entered seriously on the study of mosses, though not till the silver cord was loosening and the end near.

One day when a terrible storm had been raging over land and sea, the wind howling like mad and roaring like thunder, Dick went down to the shore and thus related what he saw:—

"I found a piece of old land strewed here and there with prostrate hazel stems. I picked out of the clay five nuts. How long it is since they grew I know not, but it must have been ages ago. Perhaps geologists would say that they grew when Britain stood thirty feet higher than it does now. But that is all conjecture. Certainly the land along our shores had once a very different appearance."

Another time he found fossil fishes in the slaty rocks while seeking his botanical specimens, not a little to his surprise, for distinguished geologists had declared that no fossil remains were to be found in the Scotch Highlands. But he read and pondered for himself, and believed the facts that came under his own notice before other men's theories; and before long a new light arose for him in the shape of a series of articles by the late Hugh Miller, entitled "The Old Red Sandstone," and published in the *Witness* newspaper, of which he was editor.

His mind was now set on the right track, and he retraced his steps hither and thither in Caithness with a new end in view. With only one exception, he found specimens of all the Ichthyolites of the lower old red sandstone, and generously made them over to his new friend. After a considerable amount of correspondence, Hugh Miller paid him a visit, inspected his treasure-trove, and went with him to the places whence it had been dug out with infinite toil and pains. He urged Mr. Dick to examine the boulder-clay for traces of marine shells, a pursuit into which he entered with ardour. This led him to embrace what is known as the glacial theory: that is to say, the probable action of glaciers on the land in what may be called the great ice period, when the climate of Great Britain was pretty much the same as that of Labrador is now.

The Thurso baker was pre-eminently a letter-writer—a gift not nearly so common as may be supposed—and his pleasant, chatty epistles touch on all subjects in earth and heaven, over and above the scientific details they contain. The following passage, written to Hugh Miller anent the annoyances he experienced from the leaders of the sect of which the *Witness* was the organ, has quite a Carlylean flavour in its shrewd common sense:—

"I candidly say that it is very hard that you cannot enjoy yourself for one day among the rocks without being assailed for it by ignorant W. W.'s, be they clerical or not. Great stir about tyrannical popery at present; but, query, may there not be among ourselves

moderate popes, free popes, and such like? Plenty, I guess. The divine right of ruling is worth ten times the stipend."

In another strain he acknowledges the receipt of some journals containing an account of the meeting of the British Association at Edinburgh, and says:

"These papers are not thrown away. They shall be duly pondered and considered. Ay, on mountain tops, even at early dawn or sober eve, when the twinkling stars and the soothing winds tell their own tale of nature's happiness in their own dear way."

This pleasant interchange of thoughts came to a sudden end with Hugh Miller's life, in 1856. The only other like-minded friend Dick ever had was a Mr. Peach, a custom-house officer well known for his researches among the fossils of the Cornish coast. After being moved about from place to place all over the country, this gentleman found himself posted at Wick, and lost little time in going over to Thurso, where he called at the baker's shop in Wilson's Lane, and was told by the housekeeper that her "maister" was in the bake-house.

The stranger sent in his name, which had the effect of bringing Dick at once from his work with bare arms. He put out a floury hand, and invited him into the bakehouse, where he went on with his employment and talked at the same time. On the wall of this sanctum the stranger observed a life-sized sketch of the Greek boy taking the thorn out of his foot, with an Egyptian god on either side; and, on enquiring, found that the baker had drawn them there in charcoal. Upstairs, he saw a fine bust of Sir Walter Scott, another of Lord Byron, and a large plaster figure of the Venus of Milo, besides expensive books, and a perfect museum of fossils, dried plants, and insects: and found the greatest pleasure in the "cheerful manner, sparkling wit, and frolicsome playfulness" of his new acquaintance.

Some time later, Sir Roderick Murchison called on Dick, and found him too busy with his batch of bread to give the baronet an audience; but another year he went again, in company with Mr. Peach, when both were admitted to the bakehouse. On Sir Roderick complaining that there was no proper map of Caithness, the baker took a few handfuls of flour, and spreading them out on his board, made a model in relief of the geological structure of the county: the hills and dales, rocks, watersheds, drainage, and, indeed, an outline of its entire geography. It was shortly after this interview that Sir Roderick expatiated to his audience at Leeds about the marvellous knowledge acquired by the humble baker of Thurso.

Thenceforth he had many visitors, but however great they might be, or rich in this world's gear, he never left his business to attend on them, though he invariably recognised and welcomed true brothers of Nature's guilds.

Years rolled over his head; his father and sisters, for whom he

seems to have had a warm affection, died one after the other; misfortune overtook him in the wreck of a steamer on board of which he had forty-five pounds' worth of flour uninsured; he had no store laid up for a rainy day, and his health began to fail. The town of Thurso increased, and bakers multiplied; he could not withstand their competition, and sank into weary depression, though his biographer says he never lost his good temper, his charity, or his hope. His neighbours looked upon him as an oddity, and his pursuits as uncanny. He had long left off going to kirk, because the minister preached at him for taking country rambles on Sabbath mornings, but he lived an upright, just, and gentle life, studying his Bible with as much zeal as he did the book of nature. He died on Christmas Eve, 1866, in poverty and unavoidable debt, and his fellow-townsmen followed him to his last resting-place in the cemetery which overlooks the shore he loved.

Men frequently deck the tombstones of the departed from whom they have withheld the right-hand of fellowship during life, and the fact that we seldom know the worth of any person or thing till we have lost it, is curiously illustrated by the monument raised to Robert Dick's memory in Thurso cemetery. But his work survives him, and is held in honour by the few who really understand and sympathise with it; and perhaps that is all he would have cared for. Some points in his character remind one of Thoreau, the Massachusetts naturalist, who loved and lived with Nature. But Dick does not seem to have cared for the living animals as he did, nor to have possessed the strange magnetic power that drew birds, beasts, and fishes to the companionship of his Transatlantic congener.

Yet it is interesting to look at their life-stories side by side, and trace the poetic element in their uneventful pilgrimages through the wilderness of this world, which, to their keen and loving vision, blossomed as the rose, and was full of those things of beauty which are joys for ever.

EASTER EGGS.

I.

THEY come to you of all sizes and of all colours: purple, and yellow, crimson, orange, and puce. The children bring them, beggars bring them, your friends send them. Some come in china bowls, some in baskets arranged with moss and flowers, and some are simply presented on plates. You are not bound to eat them—that is one comfort, else the inconvenience might decidedly be very great, since every egg is boiled to the consistence of a bullet, and is, of course, cold. Nevertheless, the custom is pretty, and the eggs themselves are pretty, the bright hues given them by the dye with which they are boiled enduing them with a most picturesque look as they lie piled among moss and flowers. Sometimes they are presented in company with *galettes* and *goffres*—two kinds of cake very popular in Belgium—the latter being a species of pancake, while the other is the identical cake which in foreign pictures of Little Red Riding-hood we see depicted in that hapless damsel's basket, side by side with the traditionary butter.

During my first Easter in the Ardennes, a whole love story came to my ears through an Easter egg and a little basket of galettes. I will not tell the tale; it shall tell itself.

"I hear Monsieur is going to Liège," said a sweet voice.

I lowered my gun with its muzzle to the ground, and looked at the speaker. She was the brightest, neatest little figure I had ever seen; a brunette, with sparkling hazel eyes, and blue-black hair, and cheeks of a brownish ruddy hue — a very picture of health and comely strength. Not very delicate or refined-looking, perhaps; yet, nevertheless, having the happier beauty of a sound mind in a sound body, with all that cheerful readiness about her which is one of the best gifts of robust health.

"Mademoiselle, it is true. I go to Liège on Easter-even. Can I do anything for you there?"

The brown cheek grew ruddier, with just a tiny tinge of crimson, which was gone in a moment, for these brunettes do not show upon their faces every shade of thought and feeling as the sensitive blondes are fain to do.

"Monsieur is very good; if only I might venture to ask a favour?"

"Ask," I responded, smiling. "I will execute your commission with pleasure."

"First, if Monsieur would let me explain who I am. I am Fifine, grand-niece to Madame Rodière."

Madame Rodière was the old lady who did me the honour to be my housekeeper, and I had heard her speak often of Josephine as a good, honest girl, who did much of the work on the little farm which her father rented.

"Mademoiselle Josephine, pray enter and seat yourself: then you shall tell me what you want at Liège."

This little conversation had taken place in my garden, just as I was going out in the hope of shooting some hoopoes * which I had seen in a meadow close by. The April wind was cutting and keen, and I was glad, therefore, to get the pretty Josephine into a warm seat by the kitchen fire. She did not use much circumlocution in coming at her request.

"Monsieur, I have a friend at Liège; will you charge yourself with a little basket for him?"

She drew it from beneath her shawl as she spoke—a pretty little covered basket of coloured straw.

"It is only a few galettes and an Easter egg; but Félix always expects them from me at Easter, and I should be so sorry to disappoint him."

"And is this all?" said I, taking the basket from her hand. "Is there no message, no letter?"

"Alas! Monsieur, I cannot write, neither can Félix; but we do not forget each other."

Again the tinge of crimson deepened her brown cheek, yet she gazed at me with steadfast, unshrinking eyes, as she continued in a firmer tone:

"We are betrothed, Félix and I. And we have not seen each other for two years. He was home on furlough, then, for a little while."

"So Félix is a soldier," I rejoined, doubtfully. "Is it a wise thing for an industrious girl like you to marry a soldier?"

"He was 'drawn,'" she answered, sighing; "he could not help being a soldier. His family was too poor to buy a substitute for him, so he is obliged to serve. He has served five years now, so in two more he will be free."

"And will it be prudent," I reiterated, "to expect a man, who has been seven years a soldier, to return home and take up industrious pursuits again? Félix will like soldiering too well for that; at the expiration of his seven years' service he will enlist and get his bounty."

Fifine opened her clear hazel eyes wide, and looked at me wonderingly.

"Monsieur has not seen Félix; when he has seen him he will not say that. He will not ask, either, whether it will be wise to marry him. I have known him and loved him all my life long," she added

* These beautiful birds are seen at times in the Ardennes in going or returning from their migrations.

innocently, as she arose and made me a little curtsey by way of leave-taking.

"Stay, Mademoiselle Fifine; you have not told me where to find your friend."

"At the barracks, if Monsieur will not mind going."

"And whom must I ask for at the barracks?"

"Félix Roussel. And if Monsieur would kindly put the basket in his hand and say: 'From Fifine Rodière, with a thousand kind thoughts,' there will be no need of more."

"But if Félix asks questions, what shall I say?"

"Please then tell him La Mère Vigneron's rheumatism is better, and my father has bought a new cow—we have called her Blanchette—and we have ten lambs this Easter. Oh, and tell him, too, that his father can walk quite well now with a stick, and on Sundays, coming home from Mass, he leans on my arm."

She made me another little curtsey, and ran away, as if she thought she had already detained me too long.

"What an absurd commission!" I said within myself, as I eyed the basket with some discontent. "The idea of making me a messenger to carry love tokens! But these Ardennais peasants trouble themselves little about the fitness of things."

II.

At Liège I hired a fly, and drove up to the barracks with my galettes and the variegated Easter egg reposing on the cushion beside me. At the gateway I found an old sergeant, grey-headed and grim, smoking a surreptitious pipe with an air of fierce satisfaction.

"Can I see a young soldier named Félix Roussel, of the 4th Company?" I asked, putting my head from the window.

The old sergeant withdrew his pipe from his lips slowly, and shook his head.

"The poor garçon is in hospital," he said. "You cannot see him without an order from the colonel. And as this is not visiting-day, you won't get one."

Deliberately as he had withdrawn the pipe from his lips he restored it, and smoked on stolidly, with a Flemish phlegm sorely aggravating to a quick temperament. Now, while it appeared to me perfectly easy to see Félix Roussel, I had not cared much about my mission; in fact, the affair had presented itself to me in a ridiculous light, and I had once or twice felt tempted to give the fair Fifine's galettes to some hungry street dog, and pelt him afterwards with the Easter egg. But lo! a difficulty springs up; a piece of military routine and a stolid Flemish sergeant stand in my way, and immediately my spirit is roused, and I feel bound in honour to overcome all obstacles, and deposit Mademoiselle Josephine's offering in the hands of her expectant lover.

"Where does the colonel live, my friend?"

The sergeant did not trouble himself to answer. Lifting one heavy hand, he pointed to a house near, and then, with extreme slowness, he permitted his hand to sink again into the pocket of his baggy trousers.

"You are Flemish, I think?"

An almost imperceptible nod was the only reply I received. His first speech, being a long one, had evidently exhausted him. Nevertheless, I was resolved to make him talk.

"What part of Flanders do you come from, friend?"

He looked aggravated, yet with the pipe between his teeth, he condescended to say—"Jabakkuk."

"Ah! a delightful village!" I cried, cheerfully. "I know it well. Smooth and flat as a table. No nonsensical trees and rocks there to hinder tillage. No hills to tire men and horses. Not a tree to be seen, except a stray pollard willow, or here and there a straight line of poplars, standing like soldiers at drill. And plenty of fine wholesome water in the ditches."

Was I mistaken, or did a gleam of satisfaction shoot from those small, boiled, blue eyes? Yes, and the pipe comes out of the mouth now.

"Ja! ja! Jabakkuk is a fine place!"

"What corn!" I exclaimed.

"What grass!" said the sergeant.

"What horses!—thick as elephants!" I continued.

"What tobacco! Ah!"

"You are right. What splendid land for tobacco!"

"And himmel! what beer!" said the sergeant.

"Petermann! and Faro!"* I cried. "Come and have a glass now."

The sergeant was won. He came, he drank, he thawed, he condescended to initiate me into certain military rules and ceremonies, which satisfactorily fulfilled, I might pierce the sealed doors of the hospital, and see Félix Roussel.

Enough that I got safely through them all, and was conducted by the sergeant himself into a long and exquisitely clean ward, lined on either side by white beds. To my surprise, he passed silently through this; as I glanced at each sickly face, thinking first this, then that was Félix Roussel, and coming at last to a small door at the end, he opened it softly, laying at the same time his finger on his lips, and whispering, in a strange voice, "Hush!"

The door was shut again immediately, and to my intense astonishment I found myself in darkness.

"This is the *blind* ward," whispered the sergeant, as I stood silent, groping with my hands, and wondering where I was.

The stillness of the room was so intense that the sound of his voice seemed unnatural, and the echo of our own steps grated harshly on my ear.

* The names of two celebrated Belgian brews.

In a moment or two my eyes got accustomed to the obscurity, and I perceived the darkness was not so great as I had imagined. And I now saw dimly many a weary figure lying or sitting listless, with drooping head, and hands clasped idly on the knees. Some were in bed with faces hidden on the pillow, as though even the scanty light admitted here was too great a pain for the vexed eyes to bear. It struck me at first as cruel to place these melancholy patients together in their dismal darkness; but then, if their affliction obliged them to shut out the sunshine, it was easy to comprehend why the hospital authorities had assembled them in one ward.

Scarcely a figure stirred at our entrance; the pitiful patience of blindness seemed to weigh down every head in hopeless apathy. Through the long length of the dismal room, the Flemish sergeant led me silently, till we reached a bed on which a young man sat in an attitude of patient weariness. His eyes were bandaged by a thick handkerchief, leaving visible only his pale, haggard cheeks and bearded mouth. One hand, white and thin with long sickness and unrest, lay on the quilt, the other pressed his forehead. No words can paint upon the mind the picture of lonely, bitter dejection presented by this pale and woeful figure.

"Félix, lad," said the sergeant, "here is a friend come to see thee."

Mechanically at the sergeant's voice the hand upon his brow formed the military salute, then fell down helpless, and no change, no hope, no smile passed over the wan face.

"A friend from the Ardennes," said I—"a friend from Saint Hilaire."

Then I saw his lips quiver, and his thin hand clutched the quilt, as with a sudden spasm.

"I cannot see you," he said wearily, stretching his other hand towards me; "and the voice is a stranger's."

"A stranger's, yes; but I bring you a message from friends. Josephine Rodière sends you this."

And into the thin hand held so helplessly towards me, I put the little basket that I had so foolishly despised. Heavens! what a treasure it was here! What a light of hope and joy it brought upon that woe-worn face! What a smile played upon the pale lips, as his hand passed over it caressingly!

"Josephine!" he said. "Then she has not forgotten me!"

Word for word, I repeated her message, while he listened with head bent forward, and a life and hope upon his face that, a moment ago, I should have said it could never wear again.

"Your parents, your friends, and Josephine know nothing of your illness," I continued. "Why have you kept them in ignorance of this misfortune?"

"How could I tell them?" he cried, as his hand pressed painfully on his darkened eyes. "It is too dreadful to tell."

I was silent. I felt such evil tidings were indeed terrible, and I already dreaded to be the messenger of such woe.

"Cheer up, lad!" said the sergeant. "You will get your discharge at any rate."

The young man raised his patient face with a weary sigh.

"I am a log now upon the earth," he said. "I was a help at home once—a prop—a comfort; but in the weary days to come I must eat bread that I have never earned, and be a burden to those I love best. O sergeant! they should take me out and shoot me now."

His head fell forward on his hands, and he groaned in anguish of spirit. I could think of no words to comfort him, neither could the sergeant, for he stole silently away, and left me with him alone. But the young man himself cast aside his misery for a moment, as he spoke again of his love.

"Ah! Fifine was always a famous hand at galettes," he said; "and here is an Easter-egg. Will monsieur tell me its colour?"

"Violet," I answered.

"Ah! a sad colour. She must have guessed I was sorrowful."

"No; she did not guess it; but I think you should write to her and tell her. Reflect what a shock your misfortune will be to her, to your mother, to all, if you do not let them hear of it before you return home. The sergeant tells me you will get your discharge very shortly. I will write a letter willingly for you, if you like."

He consented to my proposition with a wistful smile, and, writing materials being procured, he dictated as follows. I put down word for word what he said, altering nothing. At our end of the long, obscure room we were quite alone, the other patients, with kindly tact, keeping away from us. Here is the letter of the poor blind soldier:—

"My Dear Fifine,—I thank you with my whole heart for your Easter gift; it came to me as the leaves come in May,* when the sun makes a sudden summer, and winter and frost vanish. For, my dear Fifine, I am very sad; a great misfortune has befallen me. I was at work here, on the new fortifications, when a mine we had made to blow up a great rock exploded too soon, and I and six other men were badly hurt. Fifine, dear friend, the hurt fell upon my eyes, and I am blind. The doctors say that, with care and rest, I may see again one day; but the good God knows; I have no hope of that myself. I am useless now as a soldier, so my colonel has sent to Brussels for my discharge, and it is expected every day. Fifine, I shall come home with a sad heart, because my father is a poor man, and I fear I shall be a burden to him all my life long. I sit through the weary day upon my bed, thinking and wondering what I shall do, not to be a burden. My poor mother is getting old and feeble. I thought to help her—I

* There is no spring in the Ardennes. The weather changes from frost and snow to intense heat, and the trees in a few days are full of leaves.

thought to work for her: but all that is over now, and I can only say, may the good God's will be done!

"Fifine, my dear, because I write this to you, do not think I make any claim on you, or wish to hold you to that promise you gave me so long ago. No; I hope I am not so wicked. I shall never *see* your dear face again; but when you give yourself to some happier man, he will let me take your hand and kiss your cheek, and bless you with my whole heart. And, until I die, you will be my sole and only love upon the earth. There, I will not say any more of this, because you have a kind heart, and I should wring it if I told you all my heavy thoughts as I brood in darkness over my happiness gone. Fifine, when I took your pretty present in my hand, and heard your message, I felt you still loved me; but that does not hinder that we must part, my dearest; I am only a blind burden, a helpless drag, not a man who can work for a wife, and bring a blessing to his home. If Henri Lefèvre still cares for you, I will try to take him by the hand, and wish him and you joy. I will, indeed, Fifine.

"My dear love, will you go to my poor mother, and break to her the news of my blindness as gently as you can? Do not tell mother the news all at once; relate it to her little by little, and try chiefly to make her think of the joy I shall have in coming home. But do not expect me, dear friend, for a fortnight yet, because you know I must walk home, and being blind, I scarcely know yet how I shall manage to accomplish the journey. Perhaps I shall find a comrade going my way, who will charge himself for a little time with the care of a poor blind man.

"I am glad Mère Vigneron's rheumatism is better. Give my respects to her, and to all friends. Present my duty to father and mother, and embrace my mother for me on both cheeks. I am pleased Farmer Rodière has a new cow. I send my respectful homage to all at your home, and subscribe myself, my dear Fifine, your devoted servant and friend, "Felix Roussel.

"P.S.—Stroke Blanchette for me. Is the rye coming up finely this spring? Ah, Fifine! I shall not help your father to reap it, as I did two years ago. Do not grieve about me; doubtless things will go happily for me, when I am once more among you all. Always thine, "Felix."

On finishing this I bade the poor soldier adieu, and, after posting his letter, I went straight to call on the colonel of his regiment. From him I ascertained that Félix Roussel's discharge was not expected from the authorities at Brussels for another week. I was glad to hear this, as it would give me time to go on to Louvain, and conclude the business I had in hand there, and on my return I would hire a vehicle, and drive the poor blind soldier home to Saint Hilaire myself.

III.

My business detained me a day or two longer than I expected; but still I had no thought of being disappointed in seeing Félix Roussel when I drove up to the hospital and asked for him. "He is gone, sir; he left two days ago."

"With whom?—how?"

"On foot. A young woman, apparently a relative, was with him."

This was all they knew. And I drove on to the barracks, trusting my friend, the Flemish sergeant, would be able to enlighten me further. But he was away on a long march, and I was fain to leave Liège in ignorance of all details respecting the poor soldier's departure. And now, having no longer the hope of his company, I renounced my intention of driving home by the hilly road between Liège and Marche, but chose the pleasanter way of going to Namur by railroad, and thence up the Meuse by steamer to Dinant. At this picturesque town, I hired a species of tilbury, with a stout Ardennais pony, and drove steadily on through the lovely scenery which lies between the Meuse and the Ardennes.

From hill to hill, over long straight roads, poplar-lined, I went but slowly, half wearying of my loneliness, till on a bridge, at the foot of a steep ascent, I drew up to rest awhile. The bridge was, more properly speaking, a viaduct, and I looked down upon a noble valley, beautifully wooded, and watered by a clear stream which dashed along rapidly, over rocks and boulders. Suddenly, amid the deep stillness surrounding me, I heard the murmur of voices, and glancing towards the sunnier side of the vale, I saw two figures seated on a bank by the water's edge. One was a young woman, stout, strong, firmly made: the other was a poor creature attenuated by sickness, and worn out by pain and weariness.

Almost at the first glance I recognized them. They were Félix Roussel and Josephine Rodière. Wondering at the girl's strength and constancy, I stood awhile, listening to their talk.

"Fifine, ma chère amie, I am exhausted," said the soldier, in a feeble voice. "Thou seest I can go no farther. Leave me here, and go on to the nearest village, and seek a shelter for thyself for the night."

Fifine paid no attention to this counsel. "See here, Félix," she replied, "I will sit here with thee on this bank, and rest as long as thou wilt; but say no more to me of leaving thee on the road, because that cuts me to the heart."

"O Fifine! I am weary unto death," moaned the blind man, as he fell back heavily on the grass. "Why should I deceive you? I can walk no more, my poor friend."

"When you have rested, Félix, you will feel stronger. Lean on me, and try to sleep."

"I cannot sleep, Fifine. My eyes smart, and ache, and sting so cruelly, that my courage is fast ebbing away, and I feel I can bear the pain no longer."

The girl laid his head gently on the grass, and rising, she went to the bank, and steeped her handkerchief in the clear water, then, first removing the bandage that bound them, she laid it softly on his eyes.

"That does you good, Felix, I know."

"O, Fifine, what a weary burden I am to you," he answered, as she went to and fro to the brook, continually renewing the cooling bandage till he felt relieved.

"There now, Félix, you talk like a child again. Why vex me with such words?"

"Because they are true. I have leaned on you the whole way from Liège: it is your arm that has supported me, your strength that has borne me up. But for you, I should have fallen on the road a hundred times. And if I can reach home, Fifine, it will be your courage, your constancy that will accomplish the task. As for me, left alone, I would lie down, and only pray to die. Oh, my dear, dear love, you have been very good to the poor blind, helpless creature who clings to you so wearily."

Fifine did not answer him; she turned her face away, though he could not see her, and shed tears silently. I had long understood that the letter I had written had brought the brave girl to her lover's aid, and I thought the richest lady in the land might envy her those tears.

"Fifine," said the soldier, anxiously, as though the silence terrified him, "are you there?"

"I am here, Félix," she answered, in a cheerful voice, stifling her tears.

"You are very patient with me," he said, softly. "Are you tired?"

"Tired! a great strong girl like me! No, indeed, Félix."

"I mean, are you weary of my complaints?" he continued, searching gropingly for her hand. "Fifine, I will never forget your kindness: whether I live or whether I die, I will never forget it. I try to think that I may accept it now, on this weary journey, because it is the last time I will give you trouble. Once at home, I will pray the burgomaster to get me into an asylum for the blind."

"You will do no such thing," answered Fifine, quickly. "What! may I not work for you? Do you want to break my heart, Félix?"

The young man was silent. I saw that pride and sorrow chained his lips. To him it seemed impossible to accept this devotion; but he would not say so now, since it pained her to hear it.

"Fifine, if I vex you, forgive me; it is not Félix who speaks, it is

the blind, sick soldier, who has wearied for a sight of your face these two years, and now that it is near him, he cannot see it."

She stooped forward and kissed him.

"But it will always be near you, Félix. Do you hear me? All your life long my hand will be close by to help you, as it is now."

She put her arm around him, and lifted him gently, as she would a child; and as his head fell upon her shoulder, I thought that if his poor scarred eyes could weep, they would weep now.

"Fifine," he said, after a moment's silence, "the sun is getting low; I will try to go on. I feel better now I have rested."

"Then let me replace the bandage on your poor eyes, Félix."

As she spoke, she removed the damp and folded handkerchief resting on them, and he, seizing her hand, instantly exclaimed:

"Fifine! I see bars!"

She fell on her knees, gazing at him wildly.

"Félix! Félix! You will not be blind! Oh, thank God! You will not be blind! It is my hand you see—my great clumsy fingers. Oh, how glad I am!—how glad I am!"

The sight of his joy touched me strangely, and I was forced to look away for a moment, lest my own eyes should fill with foolish tears. I would have gone down into the vale to help them long ago, but the pony was restless, and I dared not leave him. So knowing they must come on by this road, I strove to wait patiently till they should join me. When I turned my head towards them again, Fifine, with trembling hands, was adjusting the bandage which covered the eyes of the soldier. As she aided him to rise, I saw he was wearied and worn to the last stage of weakness, and I perceived by his listless attitude of patience that the hope of recovering sight was far fainter in him than in her.

Up the steep bank, and on between the poplars into the road, she supported him with her firm arm, bearing him along as he leant on her in his weakness, heavily. Intent only on aiding him, seeing only him, she did not perceive me, till with the long reins in one hand, I held the other towards her.

"Fifine, I am here to help you. This carriage is for you and Félix, and I will lead the pony."

She burst into tears of joy; she could not utter a word to thank me, and when at last speech came, she could only talk of Félix.

"Ah, now, thank Heaven, he will be home to-night—he will be weary no more! And, Monsieur, a minute ago, he could *see*—think of that, he could see!"

"It was only for a moment," said Félix, with a wistful smile. "It is all dark again now, Monsieur."

I would say nothing in reply, but in my own heart I had great hope, from that momentary flash of sight.

It did me good to see the relief, the thankfulness, with which the poor invalid sank down upon the cushions of that uncouth tilbury.

I believe, but for this help, Fifine with all her courage and her strength, would never have brought him to Saint Hilaire. As it was, we made quite a triumphal procession as we entered the village about eight in the evening, I still leading the pony, and Josephine waving the handkerchief from beneath the hood of the queer little carriage.

I cannot describe the meeting between father, mother, and son. To English readers, it might appear strange, extravagant, an exaggeration of feeling. It is not all who know how far stronger and more sacred, abroad than at home, is that pure love which we call filial and parental.

The poor soldier fainted as his mother put her arms around him. This mingling of joy and sorrow, added to his pain and weakness, overcame him. When he recovered sense and speech, he placed Josephine's hand in his mother's. "Thank her, mother," he said; "I cannot."

In looking on the old couple, I saw in their age and feebleness the girl's reason for walking to Liège to fetch her lover. *Their* arms would have been of no use to him, their feeble steps could not have aided his. All were so poor that a vehicle was never thought of.

My story is nearly told. In a day or two, when Félix was rested, and seemed stronger, I fetched the good doctor from Saint Elmo to examine his eyes. The result was, as I had supposed, hopeful. Yet for many weeks it was only an anxious, uncertain hope; for if sight came back for a moment, it flitted away again like a shadow, leaving his darkness more depressing. But as strength and health returned, sight came gradually, not sight perhaps as he had once possessed it, but enough to make him happy and to earn his living.

Henri Lefèvre danced merrily at the wedding; love could scarcely touch so careless a heart, and it was he who claimed the first kiss of the bride's cheek, and wished her long life and happiness.

CARDS.

FEW among the many of us handling, from time to time, the figured pasteboard called a "playing card" ever bestow a thought as to its origin, and the circumstances which have formed cards to be one of the most distinguishing features of social life. And yet such considerations are worthy of attention, if only to afford indications of human impulse and ingenuity.

The historical point which marks the primary existence of cards is somewhat obscure as to absolute date of origin. Their ancient invention has been ascribed to the Asiatics, but the only ground for such surmise is based on a court record of the reign of Edward I. of England, which speaks of that monarch playing "the game of four kings," when in Syria. Again, the Romans have been, without reason, accredited with the introduction. But of this we may at least be certain, that cards were first positively used in Europe in the year 1275, as attested by numerous old writers, in their works. We find them mentioned in the Stadtbuch of Augsburg, 1275, where it is stated that Rudolph I. amused himself therewith. In Germany, indeed, they were general from the year 1286, and in Italy from 1299.

It is therefore manifest that the popular notion is erroneous which assigns the invention to the French in 1390, when, to divert the failing brain of Charles VI., cards were provided. An entry in the Treasury Registry gives 56 sols to one Jacquemin Gringinnier, painter, for three packs of cards, gilded and painted, for the king. Whether they were employed as a game is, nevertheless, doubtful. The French also name the reign of Charles V. for the date of origin, on the authority of the king's page, who mentions cards in his memoirs.

Like the monastic missals, cards were at first drawn and painted by hand, until the printing blocks were invented for stamping devices on the card. It would seem suggestive, as these same blocks now appear to us, that our forefathers here, 150 years before the actual introduction of the art of printing, halted on the very threshold of that glorious discovery.

It is interesting to trace the source, certainly French and Spanish, which called into existence each different "suit" in a pack of cards. The four suits originally symbolized the four great divisions of men, in their worldly estate. By the cœurs (hearts) are meant the choirmen or ecclesiastics, and therefore the Spaniards, early devotees to the game, have *copas* or chalices, instead of *hearts*. The nobility were represented by the ends or points of lances or pikes, which the English, in their version, vulgarly supposed to be *spades*. The Spaniards here again have *espadas* (swords). The merchants show

as "diamonds," which were intended to be square stones, tiles, and other merchandise of that class. The peasants and agriculturists lastly figure in the shape of the Trèfle (trefoil leaf or clover-grass); but how the English term of "clubs" became applied is certainly mysterious, unless, as imagined, it was borrowed from the Spanish, who have, for this suit, *bastos* (staves or clubs).

The "four kings" purported to be David, Alexander, Cæsar, and Charles, typifying the monarchies of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Franks under Charlemagne, and these names long continued to be stamped on the French cards. The "Queens" were Argine (anagram for Regina), Esther, Judith, and Pallas, *i.e.*, royal birth, piety, and wisdom. The "Knaves" implied attendants on knights, the old signification of "*Knave*" being servant. The chronicle runs that on the original French cards, two famous knights of the time were, themselves, designed.

It must, however, be borne in mind that the forms depicted on the ancient cards varied according to the artistic skill and feeling of the designer; for, at first, the outlines were made upon the before-mentioned blocks of wood, and stamped on the cards, the decorative portion being then filled in by hand. Of course, after the invention of engraving on copper, the graver performed that work.

Some very curious specimen packs of ancient cards have been, and doubtless still are, in the possession of antiquaries. The very "suits" are no longer explicable to us. Sketched with much elaboration of detail, is a King surrounded by Columbines, and called the "King of Columbines," which answered to our "Spades." Likewise the "Queen of Rabbits" (clubs), "Knave of Pinks (diamonds), and the "Ace of Roses" (hearts). The other cards belonging to the pack, the points of which corresponded in number to the present, are also drawn in the form of flowers and animals. The four suits were also designed as *bells*, *hearts*, *leaves*, and *acorns*. Here again the "bells" signified the nobility, who attached those ornaments to their hunting hawks; the hearts (as before noticed) the ecclesiastics; the leaves, the gentry, by virtue of their landed estates, parks, trees, &c.; and the acorns, the farmers, on account of their agricultural pursuits. The figured cards which we call "court," no doubt derived their name, through corruption, from *coat* cards, that is to say, "coated" figures. This was an age of symbolism, when signs played the part of education; and if mediævalism has done no more, it has at least taught us to respect their arts, efforts we may emulate, but cannot equal in result.

So popular with all classes did cards become, in the different countries of Europe, that the stern arm of the law was directed in suppressing them, the authorities classing the amusement with dicing, gaming, and such "nefarious practices." On their introduction into Spain in 1387, John I., king of Castile, promulgated an edict against cards, as did the Provost of Paris in 1397.

As a branch of trade in England, the manufacture of cards soon attained some importance, for we find Edward IV., in 1463, granting to the card makers of London a decree forbidding their import; and in the reign of Henry VII. they gained the height of fashionable esteem, the amount of £5, no mean sum in those days, being devoted by the Treasury to the purchase of a pack for the King's diversion. The people of England, until this reign, had enjoyed immunity from interference with regard to such games, but the monarch enacted a statute prohibiting the "apprentices" from indulging in the same, except during the Christmas holidays, and then only while under the roof of their respective masters. This was confirmed, with due severity, by Henry VIII. Repression of national sports must, however, necessarily be transitory, and as each generation passed away, the love of cards was transmitted in succession.

They became an indispensable adjunct to Christmas entertainments, and the squire of Queen Anne's time possessed, we are told, an almost superstitious regard for cards, never playing till the festive season came round, and then the family pack was produced from the mantel-piece, with due solemnity. Stevenson, an old writer of Charles the Second's time, says, "The country maid leaves half her market, and must be sent again, if she forgets a pack of cards on Christmas Eve."

To speak of the various games that delighted our ancestors would be a work in itself, but it may be remarked, in passing, that "Primero" (Spanish origin), prime trump, gresco, gleek—names now vanished from our vocabulary—were once much in vogue. Whist, or whisk, as formerly called, and which stands pre-eminent, is of comparatively recent origin, at least in our form of play. It has been thought to be derived from the old game of "trump," but the rules under which it was framed differed very materially from the modern. Mention is first made of whist in the "Beau's Stratagem," a play of Farquhar's, written in 1707, but we are informed that it was not earlier than one hundred years ago that the game began to be studied according to improved lights, by a party of players assembling at the Crown Coffee House, Bunhill Row, London.

It may interest some, not so acquainted, to read of the simple manner of making a "playing-card." The following particulars are from a reliable source.

Blocks are still used for the outlines of the card, but the characters are produced by the process designated "stencilling," *i.e.*, the device is formed by means of an oiled cloth or paper, in which apertures are cut representing spades, diamonds, &c. This is laid above the card, and then the surface of the stencil or pattern is painted over with a brush full of black or red water colour, gilding being done in the same way, excepting the use of gilders' size instead of colour, after which application the surface is powdered with gold

dust. The duty of 1*s.* per pack (now 3*d.*) produced in 1841 the sum of £9,223 10*s.*, an appreciable item of Revenue receipts.

"Sharpers" are in the habit of manufacturing special marked cards for their own operations.

We cannot resist quoting, at the close of our remarks, a passage from Dean Swift's satirical "Lines on his own Death," where he describes the effect that the news of his demise would cause in the social circle of his quondam acquaintance, and more especially on his female friends. They are engrossed under the all-absorbing influence of cards, and their exclamations are thus happily anticipated :—

> "The Dean is dead (pray what is trumps?)
> The Lord have mercy on his soul,
> (Ladies I venture for the vole)
> Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall
> (I wish I knew what king to call)."

The Dean, shrewd and bitter observer of men and manners, had in his eye the card tables of Queen Caroline's salon, of which the queen and her despicable consort, together with the court, were inordinately fond.

In conclusion, however, we cannot, with any reason, puritanically deprecate a game of cards. There is a time for everything, saith the preacher, and considering the capacity of man's nature for genuine amusement, so long as it remains uncontaminated by sordid motives, morality gains a support through relaxation, rather than sustains a shock.

Truly, if love of gain pervert the man, his amusement becomes mere money-changing, and no longer sport. If in England we were not so beset by privileged vampires, who lure on the tempted, we might enjoy the blessing of a pure "turf," athletics in all branches, conducted under auspices worthy of classic traditions, and national games exhibiting their champions in the light of heroes, rather than, as is too often the case, that of authorized rogues bearing the specious hall mark of "Sport." Endeavours to effect this would not be tilting at windmills, but in the end, veritable reform for the weal of the community.

HOME AT LAST.

By Lois Selbon.

MY Uncle Selby's was a strange home to choose for a delicate boy of twelve. I have often wondered since whether, had my mother lived, she would have sent me to be an inmate of her eldest brother's house. She had scarcely heard anything of him or his doings since he had left their country home to set up in London as a solicitor. This had been long before her own marriage. In those days communication was not what it is now; members of families were easily lost sight of in the far-away metropolis if one or the other did not especially care to be remembered.

I had a sad limp in my gait. It was to try and cure this that I was sent up to London to be under the famous surgeon of that day. Quiet old Bucklersbury, in the heart of the city, was the place my uncle had chosen for his residence from the first, and in it I still found him, when I arrived at my destination one dreary October evening in the year 18—. It was an eminently respectable little street, much favoured by bankers, who still lived in their banking-houses at the time I am writing of. Its respectability was only equalled by its gloomy dullness; yet the outward gloom was as nothing compared with the inner dreariness of my uncle's house. Even a child could feel how oppressive was the moral atmosphere of John Selby's home.

On the very first morning after my arrival, I made a rather curious discovery. The room assigned to me was at the tip-top of the house; and when Rachel, the confidential servant and cross-grained factotum of the house, conducted me up to it on first getting to Bucklersbury, I thought we must be climbing up a tower. She assured me, however, that it was only "the attics" we were bound for.

"We put you up here to be more comfortable-like, Master Ruthven. Master and Mistress hates all kinds of noise; but here you can please yourself and make as much racketing as you please—though I suppose they forgot your lame leg. I'm afraid you'll find that rather awkward in these high houses." And she left me for the night.

Rachel did not tell me at what time I had to be down to breakfast, so when I awoke next morning to the sound of Bow Church clock chiming eight, I jumped up in haste, lest I should be reproved for being late. We were early folks at the Rectory at home, and my father always expected me to have done a good hour's Latin before the eight o'clock breakfast. As soon as I was ready, I peeped out. There was only just light enough struggling in through the staircase window to show what a very dark, foggy morning it was, and there

was not a soul to be seen or heard. "They must be at breakfast already," I said to myself, and began to descend the stairs.

Having got down two flights, I found myself close to the door—as I supposed—of the room where Rachel had given me my supper on the previous night, whilst Uncle John had asked me questions about home, and Aunt Matilda had hardly taken any notice of me at all. I opened the door in some trepidation, walked in, and saw my mistake in a moment. The window was uncurtained and the room comparatively light, so that I could take in its principal features at a glance.

Before leaving home, my father had told me there were no children at uncle Selby's: yet here, on a low couch, sat a whole row of dolls, with their house and all its appurtenances on a table before them. Besides this, there were balls and toys of various kinds neatly stowed away on the shelves of a low cupboard with glass doors, which stood opposite the window, immediately below a large picture. This picture excited my curiosity more than all the rest, for it was covered with a black crape veil, so thick that it was impossible to distinguish anything beneath it.

"Very odd," I thought, "no children, and all these toys; and that great picture—how I should like to have a peep under that black stuff! I must ask Rachel all about it."

With which resolution I left the room, and forgot to shut the door behind me. As there was still no sound to be heard in the house, I made my way upstairs again, not caring to venture further without a guide. On the top landing I met Rachel coming down.

"Why, bless me! wherever are you a-coming from, Master Fairley?" she exclaimed in surprise.

"I have been down to try and find the breakfast room, and ——"

"You couldn't find it, I suppose—for the best reason that there isn't one. They dine and breakfast and live all in the same room here—not that it was always so, though. It's the one you were in last night. There is a drawing-room, but——"

Here Rachel stopped suddenly. We had got to the door of the room I had just been in. Turning very white, and staring at the door, she whispered: "Who opened that door? I must have forgotten to take out the key last night—who can have been in there?"

"I have, Rachel," I said at once. "I went in by mistake. Outside it looked just like the room you took me into last night. And, Rachel, I want so much to know all about it—do tell me——"

But Rachel did not hear. She had slid away to the door, which she closed noiselessly, and slipped the key into her pocket. Then she drew me downstairs after her—down, down, down to the very depths of the staircase, which got darker and darker, and ended in the kitchen. If it had been like climbing up a tower the night before, it seemed—to the country lad—just like going down into a well this morning.

Once arrived at the bottom, Rachel closed a door, and then grasping me tightly by the wrist, she said solemnly in a deep whisper, as if she might be overheard even here: "Promise me faithfully, Master Ruthven, that you will *never* try that door again, and that you will *never* tell your uncle and aunt that you have been inside it. I am telling you for your own good. You would make the place too hot to hold you, if you could not keep from chattering."

I promised, feeling very uncomfortable and guilty, and yet not knowing what it was I had done. Rachel scanned my face narrowly: apparently she was satisfied with what she saw, for she bid me follow her upstairs again, and then showed me that the general sitting-room was immediately under the forbidden one, the landings being exactly alike. It was, in fact, the back drawing-room; the front room was never used excepting on Sunday afternoons, when, for some unaccountable reason, my aunt always insisted upon our sitting in it for several weary hours.

I used to think this was intended as a penance for not going to church in the evening, which we never did in winter, and very rarely in the summer. The room was several degrees gloomier and drearier than the rest of the house; and it certainly did not add to the pleasure of those Sunday afternoons, that Uncle Selby always came and sat with us. I often thought that he kept a furtive watch upon his wife, though why I could not fathom. She hardly ever went out, and never without him; and if he chanced to find her absent from the sitting-room, he generally went in search of her, under one pretext or another.

As time wore on, I got accustomed to my surroundings: to the gloomy house and fog-encrusted windows—which Rachel's occasional rubbings never seemed to brighten—to my aunt's far-away look, and to my uncle's hard, sharp manner. Perhaps the monotony was good for my "cure." I soon began to feel a change for the better, and the doctor pronounced himself quite satisfied with my progress. What with that, and reading for an hour or two a day with a neighbouring clergyman, and an occasional outing with Cousin Jack, my life was by no means an unhappy one.

Our little party had been augmented by the arrival of Cousin Jack about a week after I got to Bucklersbury. He appeared quite unexpectedly one evening, saying that he had been detained by business much longer than he had expected, and hoped that his father and mother had not felt uneasy about him. Jack Selby was about five-and-twenty when I first saw him. Tall and good-looking, with a pleasant, taking way about him. Yet had I been old enough to criticise, I should have seen the weakness in the well-cut lips, and an occasional hesitation in the large dark eyes, before looking a questioner straight in the face.

But how my aunt brightened up on Jack's return! And even his father greeted him with a kind of pride.

"We always know you have some good reason for not getting back as soon as we could wish, Jack," he said; and my aunt added with more energy than usual, "Yes, yes; Jack is always to be trusted; thank God for it!" And she looked at him as affectionately as those deep-set eyes could look.

Jack, however, did not answer, but busied himself about his supper. Rachel was the only one who did not seem to care for the new comer, and looked her severest when she brought him some tea; vouchsafing no answer when Jack bade her good evening, and added jokingly that she grew more sweet-tempered-looking each time he came home.

Cousin Jack was very kind to me, and used sometimes to take me to the play. There we were always joined by some of his friends—amongst them a woman, to whom I took an intense dislike at first sight. She was handsome, tall, and not very young, with a high colour in her cheeks and glittering black eyes, that always made me feel uncomfortable when she fastened them upon me. Yet she was very kind to me, and I could not tell why I almost hated her. She was very familiar with Jack, who called her "Madge," and she always spoke of my uncle and aunt as "those stupid old fogies at home," which I resented greatly.

"It's no use talking about the people you see when I take you out, Ruthven," Jack had said to me, after our first evening together, "they would never understand it at home; and besides, you know, they are perfectly satisfied if you are with me." Which was quite true. Again, Rachel was the only one who occasionally said something about its "not being good for delicate lads to be out so late," but she was always silenced immediately by my aunt. "Be quiet, Rachel, and do not talk nonsense. You know as well as I do that nothing can be better for the boy than being with Mr. Jack," she would say.

"But I don't know nothing of the kind," I heard the woman mutter to herself one day, after Mrs. Selby had rebuked her as usual, and then turned away. "He's no better than he should be, I'll take my oath upon it; and there's that sainted angel——" Here she probably remembered that I was within ear-shot, for she stopped suddenly, leaving me to think over her mutterings and wonder what they meant.

There seemed to be very little business going on in Uncle Selby's office, which occupied two of the rooms on the ground floor: the third being a little library, of which I had the run. But then there was no one to do anything but my uncle and Jack, who was so often absent. Besides these two there was only a boy who came in for a few hours a day, to carry out letters and do the various errands of the firm. I soon found out that my uncle had a most extraordinary antipathy to clerks, and would not have one in the house.

One afternoon I was hunting up a book in the library. The doors

between the rooms were open, as usual; I could see my uncle sitting at his table, and Jack lounging against the window, when I looked across to the door occasionally during my search. In a little while I heard uncle Selby complain to Jack about his being kept away from Bucklersbury so often, so that he, the man getting into years, had to do all the home-work alone.

"Well, father, you ought to keep a clerk again, as you used to do before—before you dismissed them all three. The business has never flourished since. It was a great mistake ——"

"Silence!" thundered my uncle. "How dare *you* talk to me of clerks, Jack? you who know the reason why I will rather starve than have another in the house."

"You know I shall never agree with you, sir, on that point; and, believe me, you will be sorry for it some day." And then he seemed to wait for an answer; but, as no answer came, he spoke again. This time there was an evident hesitation in his manner, very different from his usual fluency.

"By-the-bye, sir," he began, "I received a letter this morning, which I think you ought to see ——"

At this point my uncle pushed back his chair with an energetic movement, boding no good to Jack's communication.

"What are you driving at now, Jack?" he asked. "Take care what you are about." And there was a sharp ring in his voice not pleasant to hear.

"I repeat, you ought to read it yourself, sir; it is enough to melt a heart of stone, father—she is ——"

But here my uncle burst forth in a frenzy of rage: "*She!* How dare you, sir! How dare you insult your father! Leave the room instantly—and remember," he added, bringing out each word slowly, with the weight of concentrated fury—"mention that subject once more, and you never set foot in it again—no, nor in the house either—not if your mother were to go down on her knees to me for you. And you know by this time that I keep my word; don't you?"

Jack quietly went to the door, but before leaving the room he turned, and this time he looked my uncle full and straight in the face. "Father," he said, solemnly, "mark my words; you will rue this day, even more than that other day!"

Then he went. Another moment, and the house-door shut behind him with a bang. Uncle Selby locked his door, and I crept upstairs as noiselessly as possible.

Jack was not heard of for more than a week, and I noticed that my aunt was much more uneasy than usual about him.

"I cannot understand Jack's not coming home," she said one evening, after she had been expecting him in vain all day. "He always tells me when he is going to stay away over night, and this time he did not even wish me good-bye. Do you know where he is, John?" And I was struck by the unusual softness in her voice.

"I have not the remotest idea of his whereabouts, Matilda," was uncle Selby's unconcerned reply. "He is not away on business that I know of."

"Not away on business!" repeated my aunt, in a startled voice; then why is he away? Is anything wrong? Oh, John," and she got up and laid her hand almost caressingly on her husband's shoulder: "Oh, John, you and he have not quarrelled, surely?" she asked, pleadingly.

"Certainly not, Matilda. Calm yourself. I never *quarrel* with my children. They either obey me, and we get on pleasantly together, or they disobey me and—leave the house. Surely you ought to have learnt that by this time." And his eyes gleamed dangerously, though his lips were almost smiling. "Jack will come back. Perhaps to-night; who knows?"

My aunt sighed heavily as she returned to her chair, with the old stony look in her face; but she said no more.

The week went by, and still no signs of Jack. My aunt got to have a fixed look of anxious expectation in her face, which I think irritated uncle Selby, for he was sharper with her than usual at this time.

Sunday came round, and as heretofore, the afternoon had to be spent in the gloomy drawing-room. I had long managed a seat for myself in a corner of one of the windows, so that I could occasionally give a glance into the street outside, without being noticed either by my uncle or aunt. Little enough there was to see at any time, still it was better than counting the flowers on the wall, or improving the ugly patterns of the chintz covers with an imaginary pencil. I had done both so many hundreds of times. Whilst pretending to read, therefore, I peeped out.

On this particular afternoon there seemed not to be a living being about. A small sprinkling of snow was still left on the ground from the morning, when it had been bright and frosty. But now the sky was overcast, and the air felt cold and raw, as the wind came howling round the corners in gusts. It seemed particularly fierce over the way, at the entrance of the little flagged foot-path—a short cut into the crowded thoroughfares beyond, from which the incessant roar and din came floating over to our quiet nook. Whilst watching the vagaries of the wind in piling up and then blowing to pieces a heap of straw and dust at this particular corner, I thought I saw something moving within the deep shadow of the high houses. By and bye I became aware that a human form was crouching there, and as at last it emerged from the gloom into the waning light of the short January day, I saw that it was a woman.

She was young, and but thinly and scantily clad. As the dust-heap by her side was shaken to pieces by the wind rushing up between the houses behind her, I could see how the blast pierced her and shook the poor frame mercilessly. When first I caught sight of

her, her hands were crossed upon her breast, as if to keep in all the warmth they could; but as she stepped forward in the direction of my very window, she suddenly clasped them, and held them a little way from her, as she looked up imploringly. Another sharp tussle with the wind, and her bonnet was blown back, disclosing a face so white and wan that it haunted me in my dreams long after. It bore the traces of great beauty, and the long chestnut hair, which the wind blew hither and thither so pitilessly, was lovely still.

I gazed down spell-bound; but for the hair, the figure was so shadowy and unreal. Gazing still, I saw her move forward a few steps, then stumble, but quickly recover herself, and walk towards our house more slowly. Suddenly she lifted her clasped hands, threw back her head, and then fell flat on her face, dyeing the snow around her with a dark purple stain. At last the spell was broken.

I jumped up to give what help I could to the poor forlorn creature, when at the same instant I felt myself pressed back into my seat by a hand of iron, whilst a voice hissed into my ear: "Don't stir or speak, or I shall kill you!" And then I knew that my uncle had been watching it all, close to me.

Paralyzed with fear and astonishment, I at first lost all power over my limbs and tongue, but in a minute sympathy with the poor thing in the snow outside, and indignation at my uncle's brutality, gave me back my voice. "Let me go, sir," I cried; "did you not see her fall? She may be dying at this moment!" And I tried to shake off the powerful grasp on my shoulder. But I was a weakly lad, and could not free myself easily.

My uncle had just raised his hand to strike me, when his attention was suddenly directed from me to his wife. My struggle to get free had roused her from the doze she had fallen into early in the afternoon. Now she was standing upright, looking like a sleep-walker. With her eyes fixed upon some object far away, she began to glide towards the window. Letting go of me, my uncle sprang towards his wife, and tried to force her back on to the couch. Seizing my opportunity, I was outside the door in an instant, calling loudly to Rachel to come and help.

I never could remember how I got downstairs or into the road; I only know that before another minute had passed I found myself kneeling beside the prostrate woman in the snow, trying to lift her and get her into a sitting position: but all in vain. A shriek made me look up. There stood my aunt at the drawing-room window, staring wildly at us, whilst her husband was trying to force her back.

"But I will see her," she cried. "I have not called her back; I have kept my promise. But now she has come of herself—my child!—my Ethel—come home!—come home at last!" And then my uncle succeeded in closing the window. Meanwhile Rachel

had come flying out of the house, calling to me as she ran. Then catching sight of the face of the poor thing I was endeavouring to help, she threw herself down by her side in the snow.

"It's Miss Ethel," she cried; "my darling Miss Ethel, my pet!" Then putting her arm tenderly round the poor worn-out body: "Look up, Miss Ethel, dear; it's Rachel, your poor old nurse, speaking to you." But the eyes did not unclose. "How cold she is! She must be got into the house at once. Quick, Master Ruthven, try and take her feet, and we will manage it between us."

"Let her lie," thundered my uncle's voice from the office window. "She willed it so herself; now she must abide by it."

"What, in the face of this!" broke out Rachel. "*You*, who drove her to it by your unkindness——and I don't care who hears me say it. She has been happier, I'll be bound, with the poor clerk she loved than she would have been with the rich old horror you tried to force upon her!"

Before my uncle could recover from his astonishment at the woman's audacity, a voice behind us said authoritatively: "Don't stand talking here; she must be carried into the house instantly; I take the responsibility upon myself. There, Rachel and Ruthven, lay hold together, and don't slip in the snow. Gently, gently!"

With which words, Jack—for it was no other than he, come back quite unexpectedly, with intentions of his own—lifted his sister's body from the ground, and bore her into the house.

Into the house and up the stairs we carried our light burden—up and up: not a word was spoken, but as if by common consent Jack and Rachel halted outside the forbidden door.

"Open it wide, Ruthven; she shall lie in her own room once more after the two long years that have passed!" and I made way for the three.

There, in the middle of the room, stood my aunt, evidently expecting us. There was nothing visible of her late struggle but an unnaturally bright feverish look in the eyes. She stretched out her arms: "Ethel, my child! my precious child! Home again at last! I knew you would come—I have been waiting for you, dear. Look, the room is quite ready for you."

Then kneeling down beside the couch, where we had placed her daughter, she went on more excitedly:

"See, darling, the crape is gone; I tore it down myself just now, after he left me alone. Your father had it put up to hide your bonnie face, dear, but now we shall be happy again together. It was all his fault. He tried to make me hate you, but I never did, though I let him think I had forgotten!" and my poor aunt laughed nervously, a miserable laugh to hear.

At last we persuaded her to go into the next room for a few minutes with Jack and me, whilst the doctor, whom Rachel had sent for at once, came in to look at his patient. When she grew quieter,

Jack returned to the sick room, and presently came out on to the landing with the medical man.

"She is not dead," I heard the latter say, "but dying, I fear. I hardly think she will be conscious again, but she may be, though I greatly doubt it. You may want me again, so I will not leave the house at once."

"Mother," said Jack, very gently, leaving the doctor to go down alone, and coming in to us—"mother: she may want to see you, but you must be very quiet with her—will you promise?"

"Only let me go to her, Jack, and you shall see how quiet I can be," and then we led her in, and she knelt down in her old place.

For some time there was a dead silence in the room, broken at last by a quick little sigh from the sick woman; then the eyelids began to quiver, and the slightest tinge of colour came into the hollow cheeks. "Allen," she murmured presently, "is it time? Must you go?" Then louder, "Oh, mother! Where are you, mother?" and as a look of pain passed over her face, Rachel stroked her hand soothingly and asked: "What is it, darling?" "My dream," the sick woman murmured again: "horrible!" and she shivered. "Turned away from home, and then left alone—" Here she suddenly opened her eyes wide, sat up with unexpected strength, glanced from one to the other, then at her picture, and passed her hand across her forehead. "At home! In the old room! But how?" she called out in painful bewilderment. Then catching sight of the bowed head by her side, which never stirred—"Oh! mother, mother! I see it all now; forgive me for leaving you!" and she sank back exhausted.

"My darling!"

The mother raised herself and put her arms round her child's neck for a moment, but at a glance from Jack returned to her former position. After a short silence, the sick woman spoke again: "Father—where is he? I would bid him good-bye." And Jack ran down at once to fetch up uncle, who had shut himself up in the library. It took some minutes to persuade him to open the door, and then it was only the doctor's warning that a minute more might be too late, that made him consent to come at last.

"Father," said the dying woman, sitting up again with Rachel's help, "I want to say good-bye—here in the old room, where you used to be so kind to your poor little Ethel. Forgive me, father, for the pain I have caused you." She stretched out her thin white hand; but as no answer came, she went on in broken sentences: "I am going to baby, father—he went a week to-day—better so—we had not bread to eat—Allen was so far away—gone to make a home for us in America—*you* know best why he could find no work here—" and Ethel's voice grew stronger, and a shadow of rising indignation passed over her face, but only for a moment, whilst the father's head bent lower in shame and sudden remorse.

Pressing her hand to her side, the sick woman spoke again, but this time her voice was weaker, and her breathing became more painful: "It lasted too long—too long—you will be kind to Allen —to your poor child's husband, when he comes back and finds us gone? He will find work then—perhaps here in his old place," she continued dreamily, and a wan little smile flitted across her face. "Jack knows—I wrote to Jack—but I gave no address—I had none to give—Allen was a good husband and tried to do for the best—dear Allen!"

She lay back with her eyes shut, and her mind seemed to wander gaain. When she reopened her eyes her father had sunk down on his knees beside his wife, quite overpowered with misery and grief. "Ethel," he gasped in his mental agony—"Ethel, I was blinded by some evil spirit—can you forgive your unhappy father?"

With her last remaining strength the dying woman laid her wasted hands on the two bent heads before her: "I forgive, as I hope to be forgiven." Then: "Father, mother, Jack—God bless you all!" After a moment's silence, she slightly raised her head, and seemed to fix her eyes on something invisible to us. "I am coming," she said in low distinct tones: "I am coming—Allen! Allen, my only love, I must go. Baby is there, calling for me!" And she sank back dead. Another blood vessel had burst.

The poor mother took no notice of anything around her—only went on stroking the cold white hand. At last Rachel, the tears streaming down her face, persuaded her to leave the room with her.

Then Jack spoke for the first time, after helping my uncle to a chair, into which he sank, a truly pitiable object in his son's eyes. "Father," said Jack, very sadly, "I came home this afternoon with my heart full of bitterness and anger towards you. But once more—God knows how unexpectedly—the peacemaker came as of old between me and the revengeful words I fully meant to say," and he glanced lovingly at the sweet dead face. "Would that I could keep from you the confession I have to make. But it cannot be. As we have made our lives, so must we bear them to the end. You believe me, father, when I say that I would spare you if I could?"

My uncle bowed his head in token of assent. Jack resumed.

"I have deceived you sadly for years past. Often when you thought I was kept away on business, I was only spending my time in idleness and pleasure. But when once my good angel had left the house, and there was no Ethel to confide in, and help me with her gentle reproof and advice, I plunged headlong into dissipation. Anything was welcome that made me forget the change at home. I became entangled with——" he paused, then added between his teeth: "Well, no matter—she is my wife now, and I must shield her as best I can."

"Your wife!" gasped my uncle, taking in the words, low as they

were, and roused by a sudden sense of a new misery. "You are married?"

"Yes, I am married," came the answer, gloomily enough. "I gave in to Madge's persistency on the day you threatened to make me follow Ethel, if ever I should mention her again!"

My uncle groaned heavily. Jack looked sadly at him.

"And, father," he began again, as if speaking were a heavy burden to him, "I cannot bring her here: it would not do for mother; yet, where poor Madge is, there must I be, too; she is my wife—so this can nevermore be home of mine again!" And after a pause: "I must go at once; she is not far from here at this very moment."

He strode over to the couch, and pressed his lips to the pure white forehead. "Farewell, Ethel, my good angel always! Would I were lying here instead of you!" And he passed his hand lightly over the wavy hair. "I will be back again, father, to follow her to her last resting-place," he said, with a great anguish in his voice, as he wrung his father's hand before quitting the room and the house.

"Two at once—two lost at once—hard, hard! God help me!" I heard my uncle murmur when, a little later, the doctor led him from the room, grown old in the space of an hour.

The next morning found my poor aunt harmlessly but hopelessly insane. She lived for some years, attended by the faithful Rachel. Her only pleasure and occupation consisted in dusting and arranging Ethel's dolls and toys, and looking at her picture.

My uncle is still alive, though very old and infirm. His home is far away from Bucklersbury. The house has long since been pulled down, without leaving a trace of the gloomy old structure behind it. Jack came back to him after his wife died and he was free once more. He is a childless and solitary man, trying to atone for the past by unwearied attention to his father, now fast approaching the land where he hopes to meet his Ethel once more.

And none save Jack and I know what the old man means when he murmurs to himself: "She came home at last—only came home to die—but she forgave me first! Thank God for it!"

M. ELLEN EDWARDS. R. AND E. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XIII.

QUIET LODGINGS.

A HOUSE near the county town, not shut in by streets, but standing in a well sheltered and productive garden; glimpses of the hills from the upper windows, and a view, from the first floor sitting-room, of the grey church tower, among venerable trees, whose leafless boughs show like delicate lacework against the blue sky. The sky may well be clear, for the air is keen and frosty; the mists are gone, and the grand mountain tops, sprinkled with snow, are again the glory of the landscape—like divine truths that have been obscured by human passions or mistakes, and when those are dispersed, are found to be just where they were before.

The first floor of this house, well known for its comfortable accommodation, had become the refuge of Adela Granard and her young charge; their hostess being sister to the faithful Charles, and rejoicing in the opportunity of waiting on his young lady. A lucky woman with her lodgers, Charles's sister was popularly reported to be—her people always seemed pleasant, and her rooms were rarely empty, unless at cleaning time. Whether lucky or not, she certainly was well fitted to succeed in her avocation, for she had a real genius for making her lodgers feel at home; their rest, their food, their warmth, their shade, were watched over, not as items out of which to extract profit, but as a charge to be loyally kept, for her own satisfaction as well as for theirs. If it be true that a garden never thrives so surely as when the gardener loves it, the same may hold good of a lodging-house. It was not every applicant that Mrs. Keith would receive;

she had her own peculiar fancies, and there were instances of her having rejected what seemed promising terms for no other reason than, as she expressed it, "she didn't like the look of them." But once cross her threshold, and be admitted to the shelter of her roof, and the laws of hospitality were on your side. If she did not literally go through fire and water in your service, she would do what was more to the purpose—make fire and water work double tides sooner than your meat should be ill-dressed, or your apartments' delicate cleanliness not preserved.

She was herself a Londoner; and, like her brother, had been a valued servant. It had taken her some time to feel at home among folks with a peculiar tongue, and habits unlike her own; but the love she bore her husband endeared the dialect to her heart; and, as she said, now he was gone she could never bear to be out of the way of hearing some of John's queer words.

The house, bought with his savings and furnished from hers, proved by her diligence and honesty a sufficient maintenance for herself and child, a girl about the age of Emily Stormount; and though winter may not be the most becoming season for a north-country home, the bright fires, the warm carpets, the red curtains, the general air of snugness and nicety, made a new comer feel that bad weather was of comparatively slight consequence while one had such good quarters to stay in.

One lodger she had who, as a rule, gave her more trouble than any other: though she would have sacrificed a good deal sooner than he should go anywhere else. The ground floor was let by the year to Archdeacon Burleigh; whose books not only lined every available wall, but, stowed away in boxes of every imaginable size, were blockades or stumbling-blocks all over her premises. With difficulty she kept the first floor clear, but everywhere else they abounded. They stopped up the passages, they slumbered on the tops of cupboards, they hid themselves under the beds, they pretended to be couches and seats under a disguise of chintz, they took up so much space in the garret that, as she said, there was no turning round; and yet, any day or any hour of the day, a parcel might arrive from booksellers in London of volumes nicely bound and requiring particular care, for which "dear Mrs. Keith" was besought to find a convenient place. If the owner had always been at home to look after them it might have mattered less; but he was constantly on the move, and she never knew how long he would be away, or that he might not appear any minute, like his parcels, expecting to find everything ready without dreaming of giving her notice. The responsibility of keeping his books clean and dry, and the uncertainty of his movements, would have been a heavy counterpoise to the honour and profit of his patronage, but for her personal attachment and reverence for himself; and though she grumbled a little sometimes, nobody else might breathe a word of complaint. "The venerable gentleman," as she

piqued herself on styling him, should never, if she could help it, take her so unawares that his wants might not be supplied in as reasonable time as he could expect; and, in spite of all the trouble he gave, she would not have exchanged him for the most accommodating lodger that ever paid rent.

With great reluctance had Adela Granard's hosts admitted that it might be better for Emily to leave their house; and, to avoid all excitement, their departure was effected as quietly as possible, and treated as a matter of course. Kate did not venture to accompany them, but Sir Marcus's carriage conveyed them to their destination: it was not far. Emily was so intent on the care of Coco that she did not seem to think much about the change till they sat down to their early dinner; when she asked, very quietly, if they were going to live together, quite alone.

"We shall try it for a little while," said Adela, "and our friends will come and see us very often. You know we should have come here first, but for the snow."

"I do not think *they* liked us to come," said the child, as she put down a plate of chicken for Coco.

"They are so kind: they wished us to stay as long as we could."

"Oh, I do not mean Sir Marcus, or any of *them*. Mr. Frankland helped us through the snow, you know."

Charles, as he handed the dishes, glanced at his mistress. They both understood the allusion now.

"If you please, ma'am," he said, cheerfully, "if Miss Stormount likes honey, there is plenty in the house. My sister is very fond of her bees: and the Archdeacon takes a deal of notice of them."

"Indeed?" said Adela, taking the hint. "I should be glad to know more about bees than I do. Perhaps your sister has some books about them. You would like watching bees at work, Emily."

"Oh, I should! Do ask her for the books, Charles; and the honey too, for my tea, please."

The tone and the look were natural, and Adela gladly kept up the conversation. Soon after the cloth was removed, Charles brought in a pile of volumes, from the Archdeacon's shelves, for Miss Granard to choose from. The child was poring over these when Kate Combermere walked in with Mr. Frankland.

"Ah!" said Kate, "I remember when these books came: it was exactly the Archdeacon's way. He stood a long time watching the hives, and at last rushed back into the house, telling Mrs Keith he was ashamed of his ignorance. Poor woman, she knew what that meant. A few days after, down came every bee book that was to be had on a short notice, and he sat up all night studying them. And, I will answer for it, he has never opened them since. I advise you to be prudent about borrowing his books, Miss Granard, or you may be like the man who was too eager for rain, and had the Ganges turned on to his garden."

She sat down by Emily, and entered into the subject with a zest which Lewis Frankland at once emulated; and when the child's interest had been thoroughly excited by his stories of queens, and workers, and swarms, and nurseries, which to her wondering ears had the spell of novelty, Miss Combermere asked Adela to show her all their rooms.

"I promised my father to see with my own eyes whether there was anything needed that you have not got."

Emily looked round in the middle of Lewis's best story. "We have not got Paul. Will you send him, please?"

"Do you wish to have Paul here, dear?" he asked.

"Yes—Coco likes him, and so do I. He is so kind."

"Paul will come and see you whenever his master can spare him, I am sure," put in Kate.

"Oh, Mr. Archdale told me he was always to be at my service," said the child, with a grave conviction of being in the right, that amused Miss Combermere not a little.

"You have not only got the Court at your feet, but the Court's visitors too, it seems," observed Kate, when they were alone in the bedroom. "At least, I can answer for Lewis Frankland; and Emily appears as sure of Ernest Archdale."

Adela's blush so brightened her whole countenance, that it went to her friend's heart to overshadow it again. But it had to be done.

"Don't be alarmed, dear," she said, taking her hand, "but it is right you should know Emily's stepfather is in the neighbourhood. He called to ask for her, an hour ago."

The bright glow faded, but the handsome face looked resolute and collected.

"Did you see him?"

"No; my father received him in his study and, in a manner that will, he hopes, deter him from calling again. He professes to come with an urgent message to the poor child from her dying mother."

"To return with him, I conclude?" spoke Miss Granard, compressing her lips.

"Just so: and my father took upon himself to decline the proposal, and refused your address."

"His being here looks as if Mrs. Dangerfield must be better. He will not be satisfied without finding us out."

"And of course he will succeed: but so long as Emily does not see him, we need not mind that. Paul is watching his movements, and Lewis and I were on the look-out the whole way coming here. I confess to a little curiosity, for he thoroughly frightened poor Miss Wilmot. She is not one of your hysterical young ladies, and was terribly ashamed of having fainted in my arms."

"What his power lies in, I cannot tell," said Adela, "but that he has a strange power over some temperaments is only too certain. The singular part of it all is, that my poor friend, whom he has

broken to his will in every other respect, has been able to resist him in this one. My dear father used to say he would strip her of every shilling, would make her give it all up; but I believe she has never touched her capital, let him treat her as he pleased."

"And you are to have the care of the child's money as well as of herself? It seems hard to lay the burden upon you at your age."

"If you only knew how I had dreaded the loneliness, the blank, empty waste which my life seemed to promise in England—how thoroughly heart-sick I was, that foggy night at Ostend when the charge was put into my hand—you would not wonder at my belief that I was called to the work, either for Emily's sake or my own," impulsively spoke Adela. "And, I do trust, in what I am trying to teach the poor child, that there will be more aid with us than with them that wish us ill."

Kate looked at her admiringly. Hers was the generous nature that takes a keen delight in the attractions and excellences of another; and it was long since she had met with anyone of her own standing whom she could wish to make her intimate personal friend—one who would share every thought, every enjoyment, every sorrow—one whom her father would delight to see in his house, and who would love and reverence him in return. The friends of her early girlhood were all either settled in life, or scattered abroad, or at rest; and she had often had day dreams of such companionship as woman finds in woman when their hearts are in tune. If, as Adela believed, she was delayed by the fog to serve one friend, why might she not have been stopped in the snow to make another?

Without saying much about it, Kate allowed her thoughts to speak in her eyes and manner, and Adela could no more have turned away from such advances, than a thirsty wayfarer from a cool mountain spring. It was the sisterly hand-clasp, the frank, loving sympathy, which she had believed she should never meet again; and if the compact between them was not sealed without a few tears, they were rather sweet than bitter. Adela Granard's heart swelled with thankfulness to God, and self-reproach for her own despondent murmurs, when she saw what friends He could raise up in her path, to help her do the work for which she had been, as it were, set apart by sorrow.

"We shall meet every day; you have not shaken us off by setting up housekeeping," said Kate. "When our visitors leave us, I shall have more time on my hands than I can dispose of profitably, and I shall come and study with Emily—about bees, or anything that is uppermost. The worst of Lewis's ever coming to stay with us is that one misses him horribly when he goes away; so it is well for me that I have you to fall back upon."

"Hem!" coughed a voice outside the door, which was discreetly held ajar; "I beg your pardon, Miss Granard, but I can't stay any longer, and I couldn't make anybody hear."

"So you took to listening," said Kate, as they both went out to him, "and are trying to look modest and unconscious, when you are puffed up with pride. What is it?" for Lewis made a sign with his thumb towards the garden.

"I saw that youngster hanging about just now, and I want to hear his news. Do you take Mrs. Keith into your councils?"

Kate was strongly of opinion that it would be safe and wise to do so; and Adela was glad to have her own judgment confirmed. Charles's sister must be trustworthy, especially when so recommended; and it was agreed that the main points of the case should be entrusted to her without reserve. So, while Lewis received Paul's report that he had tracked the Professor to the "Green Rushes" inn, where he was to sleep that night, Kate confided to Mrs. Keith as much of their difficult position as she thought would be understood.

Mrs. Keith had already received a hint from the Archdeacon; while her brother Charles had expressed his private opinion to her in obscure hints. But the facts of the case were far beyond anything she had ever imagined; and the vision of the sick mother sending away her only child, that she might be out of her husband's keeping, stirred up the motherly heart within her to a warmth of sympathy that boded ill to the enemy, should he venture on her premises.

"To think of the courage of that young lady, too—and she in trouble herself, as Charles has telled me of, enough to break her heart! Quite a picture, too, to look at, as I said when she came in at the door: though Charles do say a picture is thought nothing of that isn't an old gentleman, and he knows more about it than I do."

"He has seen a good many of the old masters, no doubt," said Kate, smiling.

"I suppose so, ma'am, and he was very fond of his own master, and of his mistress too, for that matter, so no wonder he thinks much of their pictures. But Miss Granard's face, if I may be so bold as say it, is quite a pleasure to look at."

Kate and Lewis departed. But Mrs. Keith could not shake off the impression the story had made. She roused herself to make a batch of cakes for the poor young lady's tea.

"Thirza, my dear," she said, as her daughter came in from school, "before you take your hat off, you must run down to Mrs. Jones for some little things I want directly. I am out of currants and citron, and that young lady made so poor a dinner I should like to see if I can't tempt her with one of my cakes."

Now Thirza had already heard a great deal more about the young lady than she at all approved; and it was rather an aggravation, just when she felt inclined to sit down in a warm corner with a new story book, to be ordered off to the grocer's, on that darkening winter afternoon. Though a petted, only child, she was taught to obey; but she put off obedience just long enough to show it was against her will; lingering over the fire, and grumbling at the cold and slip-

periness of the roads. Losing, however, not a word of what was said by her mother and Uncle Charles, who were talking so earnestly about the lodgers that they overlooked her for some little time. Her mother, suddenly perceiving that she was not yet gone, hurried her away, telling her to be quick, and not chatter—an injunction by no means superfluous, but which affronted the young lady not a little.

"Walk fast, indeed! Would it not serve them right if I slipped down and broke my leg?" she thought, as she went on. "As to chattering, who is there to chatter to?" However, either the exercise, or the reflection that cake-making had its advantages, restored Thirza's good-humour by the time she reached the shop; and in answer to Mrs. Jones's friendly enquiries, she was more disposed to boast of the lodgers than to grumble at them. Quite indifferent to the fact that another customer was listening, she proclaimed that one of the ladies was very beautiful, and the other very rich and very delicate; adding a great deal of information besides, which she had caught up and interpreted her own way. All this much to the edification of Mrs. Jones; who, being an old acquaintance, and having an eye to future custom, begged to add to the parcels a nice little cream cheese to tempt the appetite of the invalid.

"Look, mother!" said Thirza, triumphantly, when she reached home; "I told Mrs. Jones about the young lady being delicate, and she has sent her this cheese. Are you not glad?"

"I should have been much more glad if you had done as I bade you, and said nothing about the ladies. It's a bad trick in a child, and in a servant it is disgraceful, to be tattling out of doors of what goes on in the family. If ever you mean to be one that a mistress can trust, my girl, you must learn to hold your tongue."

It was good advice for the future; for the present the mischief was done.

"Cecilia, my dear!" said Mr. Bourne that evening, as the party at the Court were at tea, "who is your correspondent, may I ask?"

"I have several, sir," said Cecilia, bravely.

"By post, granted, and I should be sorry to interfere with them; but who writes to you in this place? I believe you got a note just now?"

"I—I—yes, I did, sir."

"May I ask who sent it?"

It was something new for him to take so imperative a tone with his ward: and the young lady looked at him in surprise, and stole a glance round the company. After some real hesitation, she replied, while playing carelessly with her teaspoon, that the note was from Miss Granard, about a book she had promised to lend her. "And she hopes the invalids are better," added Miss Wilmot, bowing sweetly to Miss Medlicott. Miss Medlicott replied by a moan, and a glance at Ernest, who smiled in return. The smile seemed more

than Cecilia could bear. She crumpled the note in her hand, and tossed it into the grate; but missing her aim, it only struck against the top bar, and rebounded upon the rug, at Miss Medlicott's feet. That lady started up in alarm; but, before anyone else could interfere, Ernest had picked up the note, and observing that no harm was done, as the paper had not had time to catch fire, dropped it into the middle of the glowing coals.

Cecilia caught his eye with difficulty, for he seemed to be nervously avoiding hers. His look, however, when hers mutely thanked him for what he had done, was gentle, and full of pity. Was it possible that he had seen through her subterfuge, and in that brief moment had recognised the hand-writing?—that of the Professor.

How mean she felt, how debased in her own estimation, can only be realised by one who has been in that miserable position—who has been driven to tell a lie, and sees that it is found out. What could she do now? Should she confide the truth to Kate Combermere? Her pride shrank from an avowal that must be so humiliating, where humiliation would gain her nothing. To throw herself on Ernest's mercy, and, owning her fault, win him back by means of his own generosity—this might, indeed, be a way out of the tangled path; a path which, she told herself fervently, she never more would tread. She contrived to invite his approach by so winning a look of supplication as only her eyes could give, and to which he could not be insensible. He sat by her side all the evening, and with considerate delicacy did what he could to prevent her thinking about what they both knew too well.

"Let me have five minutes to-morrow morning," she said to him, privately, before they parted for the night. "There is something I must explain."

He assented, of course, with a warm assurance that he was always at her service when she needed him. And Cecilia went to her room, to weep bitterly over her untruth, which she would have given anything to recall; and yet to nurse a hope, which the day before would have seemed insane.

Oh, if he would forgive her—if, without crossing the border-line which woman may not pass, she could only let him know that she loved him—that she repented every word and deed that had cost her the esteem which was now more precious than life! What a gentleman he was; how full of chivalric courtesy, how brave over his sufferings, for which he had never reproached her himself, nor put it in the power of anyone else to do so. And if he had been cold, and felt angry, and bestowed all his attention on a new acquaintance, still, the instant he saw her in distress, and she appealed silently to his generosity, how promptly he had answered to the call!

"Oh, if I only can get through this, get all put straight between us, how good I will be! How I will watch my silly tongue, and try to make amends! I'll bear all Mrs. Bourne's advice, and pity all

Miss Medlicott's maladies—though she never can have had so bad a headache as mine is at this minute!"

Morning came; and with a heart almost sick with alternations of hope and fear, Cecilia Wilmot went down to breakfast, to receive the first shock of disappointment in Mrs. Archdale's announcement that her son had been in intense pain the greater part of the night, and had only just fallen asleep. She had left Paul watching by his bedside, and hoped he would now sleep for some hours.

Everybody was ready with words of sympathy, some real, some civil; but the one who felt most said least; and the mother's quick eye did not fail to observe how the fair young face fell at the news, and the hand trembled that was usually so dexterous and light. All the time that she was listening to the kind remarks of Sir Marcus, Mrs. Archdale was weighing in her mind what it would be wisest to do; and whether it would be wise, in her present uncertainty respecting Ernest's sentiments, to invite the confidence which had once been almost offered. Before she had arrived at any conclusion, Paul came to tell her his master was awake, and wished to speak to her. On hastening to his bedside, he gave her a note, asking her to deliver it to Miss Wilmot.

"And if you can, mother, give it to her alone, and wait for her answer."

"I will, my dear boy. Will you tell me nothing more?"

"Nothing more now; but I know you will be good and kind, as you always are, dear mother. Close the curtains—I cannot bear the light."

She could ask no more questions; and presently went in search of Cecilia. Whom she easily contrived to secure alone.

"My son asked me to give you this," she said, in her kindest manner. "I am in hopes there is something you wish me to do."

Cecilia tore the note open. It contained these words: "If Miss Wilmot will make a friend of my mother, there is no one on whose advice she can more safely rely. E. A."

She looked up in the lady's face, thought she read encouragement in her smile, and flung herself into her arms.

"I have no mother to help me—and I am very miserable. May I—may I tell you all, and ask your pardon, that I may hope for his?"

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. ARCHDALE'S MISSION.

THE gamester who has lost his stake is generally the most eager for another trial. As Cosmo Dangerfield walked across the grounds of Comber Court, sore with the repulse he had met with, and furious at the coolness with which Sir Marcus had treated his claims, his best

consolation lay in the formation of a new line of attack. That he might one day be revenged on the "insolent fashionable surgeon," who had bowed him out of his house as if he had been a troublesome patient, was a comfort he promised himself on the spot, grinding his teeth as he did so. "I'd give a year of my life to slip little Mowatt upon him, and see him pay off his own score as well as mine," he thought. At present he must concentrate his powers on the pursuit of Adela Granard and her charge. Where had they found a refuge, and why had they quitted the Court? As he returned to the "Green Rushes," where he had slept, he made one or two enquiries in a careless sort of way, but elicited nothing. The busy village, which made the doings of the Court its own, had not yet heard of the removal; and he was fain to trust to the sagacity of an ally he had already engaged—the young woman who waited upon him at the inn. The grand air of mystery which he knew so well how to assume, backed by his fair words and golden earnest of future reward, filled her with zeal in his service; and it was a glorious chance in his favour that she was in the grocer's shop when Thirza's love of talking outran her discretion. She carried back to her strange lodger the address he sought; and that night, under the stars of a wintry sky, Cosmo walked under Mrs. Keith's garden wall, and examined the premises with his own eyes.

If only Paul had still been in his service! But Paul made no sign—kept aloof from him like a wary dog, that knows its doom if it is caught; and evidently threw his experience into the opposite scale. The Green Rushes, however, supplied a messenger, by whom he despatched the note to Miss Wilmot the previous evening, which caused her so much embarrassment; recommending her, for her own sake, to meet him at the little railway station at eleven o'clock the following morning. And at that hour he was pacing up and down a raised piece of ground, whence he could see to a distance either way. There was no train due, and no one was about; still anyone might have business at the station, so there was nothing to attract attention in going there—a reason in favour of its selection. He had not watched long before he saw a lady advancing from the direction of the Court; but in height and carriage too unlike Miss Wilmot to be mistaken for her for a moment. He drew up his own portly figure, and descending the slope, met her about twenty yards from the station.

"I believe I am addressing Professor Dangerfield?" said the lady, as she might have greeted him in his own apartments. He bowed low, fixing his eyes upon her without any other reply.

"My friend Miss Wilmot, whom you were good enough to propose meeting on a matter of business, is unable to come herself: she has deputed me to arrange it for her, if quite agreeable to you."

"Nothing could be more agreeable to me than to make the personal acquaintance of Mrs. Archdale," returned the philosopher.

The recognition was so unexpected, that the lady could not

disguise a little uneasiness. She observed with a light smile, that one never realized how much, or how little, one was known in the world.

"However, since you do know me, I have no need of introduction, and we may proceed to Miss Wilmot's business without further preface," she continued. "I trust, Professor, you have only been trying an experiment on the nerves of this young lady, and that you will let me see that letter destroyed, about which she is so unhappy, without obliging us to lay the matter before her guardian."

"I should be unwilling to do anything that might cause a coolness between Miss Wilmot and her guardian," said he, drily, "as I understand her future prospects depend very much on his pleasure."

"She has means of her own, if you mean that," said Mrs. Archdale, quickly.

"Yes, madam, and ways of spending them, as most ladies have. Hers would be but a small fortune to marry upon: as no one knows better than Mrs. Archdale."

"Do you propose trying my nerves, too, Professor Dangerfield, by displaying knowledge of *my* private affairs? I give you notice, that I spring from a race of *esprits forts*—and that no wonders ever come to pass when one of us stands by."

"Not even such a wonder as a son concealing debts from a mother?—and a mother presuming on the confidence of a son?"

The words were spoken with a distinctness that seemed to ring through the listener's head, though he did not raise his voice in the least. She flung back her veil to breathe more easily; the blood rushed to her temples.

"Whatever you may mean by such a speech," she said, struggling to maintain her dignity, "it proves nothing more than this—that in some underhand manner the privacy of families can be invaded, and slanderous stories repeated to their discredit. If this be spiritual science, I am glad I know nothing about it."

"It is our misfortune to give pain where we would gladly give peace," he returned gravely, with a touch of sadness in his tone. "Those who come to us for information do it in hopes to find their wishes presented to them in the form of prophecy; but we must tell the truth, and bear the abuse we meet with in return. You know whether I have told you truly or not; though the means of my knowledge are at present only a subject for your scorn. Take care, however, madam: these things are more serious than a lady's judgment can fathom."

She laughed bitterly. "I tell you again, Professor, I am a non-believer in all those mysteries. Were it possible for you, or any of your party, to call up a spirit whom I could summon, and he were to tell me what no one else can tell—then, indeed, I might admit you have power, either for bad or good. At present I can only see a display of cleverness; and you must allow me to wish it were better employed."

"Mrs. Archdale, you doubt my power. As you have yourself fixed the test that would satisfy you, I accept the challenge, and will remind you of it some day. As proof of my good-will to you and yours, I grant your request, and give you the letter you ask for. Here it is. I only ask one small service in return."

"What may that be, sir?" said she, agitated in spite of herself.

"I ask nothing underhand; only that you will go without delay to Miss Granard, and ask if I may see my child Emily alone for ten minutes only. I have solemnly promised not to return without doing so, and hearing from her own lips that she refuses to return to her mother. I might, by means about which you are incredulous, obtain a meeting against her will, but this I will not do unless I am obliged; for, to own the truth, I pay dearly enough for every exercise of power. If you can prevail on the young lady to grant my request, you will make me your servant, and find I can do much more than you suppose."

"I would rather have you for a friend than an enemy, Mr. Dangerfield; and though I do not see how you can serve me, I have no objection to deliver such a message. If you can really assure me that you mean only kindness to that poor child: who seems terribly afraid of you and your spirits, black or white, whichever they may be."

"Poor child, indeed!" said he, sadly. "It is a hard destiny to be the chosen of the invisible—the fire is too strong for the earthen mould, and the dignity is dearly bought. But such things are beyond our control. I myself am but an instrument, and what I do is often done against my will, exposing me to hatred—or, as you say, to slander. Those who have removed Emily from me have incurred a terrible responsibility. The gift she possesses, if left unused, will be her destruction. I could guide it for her health and happiness; your fashionable doctor can only turn it so as to prey upon itself."

"Well, sir, that is for the doctors to decide. I am willing to tell Miss Granard what you say, and will take charge of the letter for Miss Wilmot."

He bowed, and handed it to her. She glanced carefully at the address: "Major Palmer." "Is it not a singular thing that this gentleman should part with a lady's note in this way?"

"It is well for Miss Wilmot that he did, madam. She made him jealous, and he has spoken bitterly in consequence—but this is the only document he had to show, and it is now in your power, no matter how it came into mine."

"And we are to be friends, then, Professor, while you are endeavouring to make me a disciple?"

"I shall be proud to earn the title of Mrs. Archdale's friend and servant."

"Then, between friends, what were you hinting at so mysteriously

about mothers and sons? My boy and I understand each other better than anyone could who came between us."

"When you return to your son, ask *him* what I meant: and, if it so please you, ask him also if he has any idea what deeds he signed when he was too ill to read them."

Proud and brave though she was, she could not repress a faint shriek. And, womanlike, lost her ground in the panic of the surprise.

"There was only one person who could have betrayed me," she said hoarsely. "And he is dead."

"Yes, madam, he is. To which circumstance I owe the knowledge which, as a living man, he would never have imparted."

"It is impossible—such things cannot be—Christians have a better hope, than that, for the world to come!" she repeated, as if thinking aloud. "I always heard the imposture was a marvel of clever wickedness, and now I know it is true!"

"Madam, those who boast of their Christian hope should surely be more careful of their Christian practice. If your son is satisfied, of course no one else has a word to say."

"You will not tell him!" gasped the lady, the bitter tears starting to her eyes.

"Are we not friends, Mrs. Archdale? You have honoured me with the name, and those of the noble house of De Sancy never use words without meaning. Had I wished to reveal your secret, I could have done it long ago. As it is, I pledge myself to silence —as your friend."

He extended his hand, in which, with a visible shudder, she placed her own. With a low bow of profound respect he then left her and entered the station, which had just shown signs of life.

As long as he was in sight, Mrs. Archdale remained like one paralysed, unable to shake off the chill dismay caused by his words. When she could command her senses, the recollection of her promise obliged her not to return to the Court, but to go on at once to Adela's lodgings. It proved to be a longer walk than she anticipated; and, oppressed with harassing thoughts, by the time she reached Mrs. Keith's house, she was sufficiently exhausted to alarm Miss Granard by her paleness and agitation.

The image of Ernest, suffering, perhaps in danger, was instantly before Adela's eyes, and his name trembled on her lips; though she found it more difficult to enquire after him than she could have imagined. Mrs. Archdale was not too pre-occupied to overlook the change of colour, the quivering of the mouth, which betrayed the interest excited by her unexpected visit; a faint smile played over her own troubled features as she looked around the apartment, and congratulated her young friend on having discovered so pretty a bower for herself and her fugitive nestling.

"I see you trust Emily out of your sight sometimes," she remarked. "Is she gone to see the skating?"

"Oh no, poor child; I could not let her go off the premises. I am strongly advised to encourage her in every childish pursuit—to make her play, if I can; our landlady's daughter is a merry girl, and they are taking Coco for a run in the garden."

"And you, I see, are deep in accounts and correspondence, which I am interrupting," continued Mrs. Archdale. "But I promised a gentleman to bring you a request, and that must be my apology."

Adela tried to assure her of welcome, but could not meet her visitor's eyes; in which eyes the sense of discovery was dawning.

"Miss Granard," she said, after considering at her leisure the beautiful face, now partly turned aside, "in undertaking the charge of your friend's child, did you lay your account with danger and difficulty?"

"If I did not at the time, I certainly have had cause to do it since," said Adela, forgetting herself, in the dread of something unknown, for the tone of the question was peculiar. "Are you come to warn me of any new danger?"

"It may be a warning; but with that I have nothing to do. I have seen your Professor, and spoken to him, and it is his message I bring. Will you allow him five minutes conversation with Emily, to discharge his conscience, so to speak, of a duty to her mother?"

"Certainly not. He shall not come near her, while I can prevent it."

"Then I have discharged *my* conscience; which is, I hope, more of a reality than his: and as you have no doubt good reasons for what you do, I shall not attempt to persuade you. But indeed, my dear Miss Granard, when I look at you, after looking at him, it requires strong belief in the goodness of your cause not to feel that such a duel is most unequal."

"You think him, then, a formidable enemy?"

"I did not, before I heard him talk just now. I met him on a matter of business, in as happy a state of scepticism as could be desired; and I am ashamed to say now, that I do not know what to think. Papers and magazines may go on arguing for ever without making an impression; but an experience of your own is quite another matter. I should not like him for an enemy, myself."

"And I should be very sorry to have him for a friend. Dear Mrs. Archdale, it is difficult for me to explain what I feel; but when you have seen the invisible so awfully near you, as I have seen it—and realised the rest and peace it offers to the redeemed—it seems like child's play to talk of spirits being at the beck and call of a man who has robbed his wife of every comfort, and wishes to ruin her child. Such a man is all the weaker for his wickedness and imposture: and, even if he is permitted to cause us pain and annoyance, he can only go as far as he *is* permitted; and there are more with us than with him."

"You really believe this?—not as a beautiful legend, but as a fact?"

"How can I help believing it? Is there not a special judgment pronounced upon those who wrong the children—whose angels behold their Father's face?"

"You take all literally. I wish I felt as you do: you would just suit my mother; some day I shall hope to make you acquainted. She is old, and leads a retired life, but if ever there was an angel on earth, she is one."

"And do you often see her?" said Adela, with glistening eyes.

"Not so often as would be good for me. Our paths lie in different directions; she is all for the next world, and I for this. I am worldly, and scheming, and want money, and to see my son rich, and honoured, and prosperous; and to compass that, I would make anyone's weakness a step in my ladder: while she would take him by the hand with her own sweet smile, and say, 'My boy, it is to the poor and meek that the richest blessings are promised.'"

"And he—to which does he incline?" asked the young lady involuntarily.

"He? Poor fellow! he loves his mother blindly, and could hardly be brought to think she could do wrong. But, should he ever open his eyes, and find her unworthy his reverence!—and he may: who knows? You have seen something of him—could he get over the fact of being deceived by the one he trusted as his own soul?"

"The little I know of him convinces me he would never fail in his duty, and you must be too sure of his devotion to you to doubt him in earnest. If we run to our mothers to confess a fault—oh, if I only could to mine!—what should we do if they came to confess one to us?"

The widow rose from her seat, the tears streaming down her cheeks. Taking Adela's hand, she kissed her forehead.

"God bless you, my dear, for those kind words. It is no wonder now to me that you are not afraid of your enemy. You have opened a prospect before me which I must take a little time to realise. No—do not distress yourself about these tears; they have done me good. It is very seldom I get such a relief. Now I have done with personalities, and will talk of other things. Have you had any visitors this morning before me?"

"Mr. Bourne came over about an hour ago."

"Mr. Bourne! Did he ask you about a note to Miss Wilmot."

"He said something about a note having arrived for her late last evening. I assured him it was not from me."

"That old gentleman has no more tact or discretion than an owl. He asks a young girl, before a room full of people, who her correspondent is—knowing by her silence that she has some reason for not mentioning the letter at all—and instead of waiting till they are alone, drives her into a corner, till she is compelled to shield herself behind an untruth, and say it comes from you."

"Compelled, Mrs. Archdale?"

"Morally, that is to say; anyone with delicacy of feeling would have let her alone: but to carry on his watchfulness to the extent of espionage, is a stroke of which I did not think him capable. I came with an apology from Miss Wilmot, and a full confession, that you might be prepared; but I see I am too late. Poor Cecilia! she is having a mauvais quart d'heure, I fear."

"Pray assure her she need make me no apology," said Adela, gravely. "But I do not see how I could have helped her had I been prepared."

"No, you are true English to the core, and you could not tell a lie to save your life. Well, I must leave you now to finish your letters, and find my way back to the Court, tired as I am."

Adela summoned Charles to escort Mrs. Archdale by the shorter cut through the meadows, by which Kate had come the day before. They parted on really friendly terms; the pressure of the elder lady's hand on that of the younger seeming to imply more than was spoken. Adela sat lost in musings afterwards, that were not favourable to the completion of her letters.

A rush of thick shoes on the stairs—the door bounced open—and Thirza standing before her, with eyes and mouth distended.

"Miss Emily's gone! She was there a minute ago, please 'm, and I can't find her anywhere!"

Adela's heart gave a jerk that almost made her ill. She retained her presence of mind.

"Where was she?—where is she, Thirza? She cannot be far off." Thirza's answer came with terrified volubility.

"Please 'm my ball flew over the wall, and I opened the wooden door into the paddock, and Coco ran out, and Miss Emily after him—and I heard Coco squeak, and a gentleman had picked him up, and said he had hurt himself, and I must run in for some linen to bandage him—and I ran to mother, and she was out of the way, and I tore a kitchen cloth, and went back, and there's nobody there now, ma'am—nobody at all!"

Adela had snatched up hat and shawl while the girl was talking; hearing the words, it is true, but feeling almost stunned. She was hurrying down the stairs, when Archdeacon Burleigh's voice pealed from below.

"Thirza! Come here! What is it?"

Thirza flew down to tell her tale: her mother at the same moment appeared to hear it. The Archdeacon looked at his watch.

"There is no up train due for some hours. We shall catch him up, Miss Granard; never fear. Are your feet well cased against frost and snow? Are you thoroughly wrapped up? Then come with me; and, Mrs. Keith, do you keep a good watch on doors and windows, for this may only be a feint to throw us off our guard."

"Oh, Thirza, Thirza, if you had only done as you were told, and not opened the garden door at all!" lamented Mrs. Keith.

"Never mind that now, my dear woman—the mischief is done, and we know our weak point," said the Archdeacon. "Come along with us, child, and show us where you saw them last."

Glad to escape her mother's anger, almost enjoying the excitement, in spite of her dismay, Thirza rushed on before. Her statement was verified by the state of the snow, and the traces of footprints, which could be followed to the highroad. For a short distance the smaller ones were visible, but they soon disappeared. It was evident that the child had been carried over the worst part of the drift.

"He would hardly have the face to take her to the 'Green Rushes' before the eyes of half a dozen witnesses!" debated Mr. Burleigh. "Yet, where else could he go?"

"The coach passed just now," said Thirza.

"The coach! so it did. The thought is worth half a sovereign, which I'll give you to-night. Depend upon it, Miss Granard, if he is not at his inn, he has tried to throw us off the trail by taking her where he can get upon another line. A wily trick; but it shall not answer. To the Green Rushes first; and there we will decide what to do next."

At the Green Rushes they could detect no appearance of concealment or surprise. No one seemed to know much about the gentleman's movements; however, Mr. Burleigh's energetic enquiries elicited the fact that he had paid his bill in the morning, and that his portmanteau had been sent down to the station. He had gone out, as he said, for a walk, intending to return, but he had not appeared yet.

Next, they went to the station: and found that the coach had stopped to pick up a gentleman's portmanteau—thus confirming the Archdeacon's first opinion.

"This is a matter for Sir Marcus," said Mr. Burleigh, as he came out with his fair companion. "We have already lost too much time, but he will spare neither man nor horse in pursuit, and we may catch them yet."

In the act of turning away to take the short cut to the Court, a porter came running out to announce that a telegram had come for Miss Granard. It had evidently been delayed in transmission, and the news it brought was of Hester Dangerfield's death.

Adela's guardianship had begun.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. BOURNE'S PROPOSAL.

From a troubled sleep, that was more like a dream of pain and distress, than an interval of repose, Ernest Archdale awoke; and by a strenuous effort dressed himself, and went down-stairs, that his mother

might think him better when she returned. Sir Marcus was out on particular business: and Stephens attended on the young officer, Paul having been sent to keep watch over the movements of Cosmo Dangerfield. On repairing as usual to the library, for a quiet half-hour of rest, Ernest was somewhat startled to find there both Mr. and Mrs. Bourne, as well as Miss Wilmot; and so evident were the signs of a vehement family discussion, that he would instantly have retreated, but was stopped short.

"You are the very person I want, young gentleman!" said Mr. Bourne, emphatically. "I am sorry to see you in such poor condition, but that is no doing of mine. You are man enough, unless I am much mistaken, to answer a plain question, whether well or ill."

"Dear Nicholas, now don't," pleaded his wife, who had been wiping her eyes. "You cannot understand—you are generally so strong—though I know you are sometimes much more poorly than you will allow; but this dear young man is so good, so patient—do let him sit down; and you can talk all this over by-and-by when you are cool, you know."

"Cool, my dear? I am an icicle at this moment. You want to make out that I am in a passion; but, though I have every reason for it, I am not. Cecilia, are you going away before I have done speaking?"

"I thought you had private business with Mr. Archdale, sir," returned she, colouring highly, but looking more defiant than humble.

"Not private at all; it is a simple question. Is it on business of yours, young gentleman, that your mother is gone out this morning?"

"My mother, sir, goes out when she pleases, and owes no account of her doings to anybody."

"Evasive, evasive—unworthy an officer and a gentleman. This is the fact; I have been told that such is the case, and I wish to know if it is true."

Ernest had by this time quietly seated himself in an easy chair, and the tone of his reply was as cool as Mr. Bourne's professed to be.

"Look here, Mr. Bourne; I do not understand anyone's right to enquire into my mother's affairs, or mine; but since you ask me, I have no objection to allow that I *am* very much interested in the result of her walk this morning. Having said that, I must decline answering any more questions about it."

"Of course," said Mrs. Bourne, "it is not likely, Nicholas dear, that young men should—dear me, if I had to tell you everything I did when I went out for a little shopping! and good Mrs. Archdale may have charitable work that nobody dreams of, and would not like to have talked about. This dear girl looks quite feverish with all this commotion; I shall beg our kind Kate to order her a little jelly, or a glass of wine. Come with me, my dear Cecilia, and let the gentlemen settle it all their own way."

And in her real kindness of heart, she carried off the young lady: who was fain to yield, though longing to be with Ernest alone, if only for five minutes.

Mr. Bourne's brow relaxed as they departed. He drew a chair to the table by which the young man sat, and held out his hand to him—an amicable opening, of which Ernest availed himself.

"You were quite right to pull me up, if you supposed I meant disrespect to your mother. I meant nothing of the kind, though I do sometimes question her judgment and common sense. No affront intended—I only wish you well; and to come to the point at once, I should like to know how matters stand between my ward and you. I had no idea there was as much intimacy as there appears to be; and I have a right to know if there is anything more."

"There is nothing, sir, that you are not welcome to know. I had the pleasure of making Miss Wilmot's acquaintance in Ireland, and our meeting here was quite an accident."

"And it is quite an accident, I suppose, that your affairs, or those in which you are very much interested, are communicated to you or your mother through her, as we saw last night. My indiscretion in asking who her correspondent was, drove her into an untruth, which is a thing I find hard to forgive, though it was my fault. That Professor fellow, who frightened her in the park, chose to send you a message through her, which your mother is gone to attend to."

Ernest remained silent, in an attitude of attention, but without allowing himself to be drawn into discussing the matter, which he now understood but too well. The old gentleman eyed him curiously, and shook his head in doubt.

"It is all too shifty and underhand to suit me," he said, "but you young people are not so particular as we were when we were young. Now, I am plain-spoken, and go straight to my point at once, and I ask you, frankly, as a gentleman, have you the means to support a wife?"

"No, sir. And until I have you may be quite certain I shall not take one."

"Are you likely to get on in the army?"

"I have strong doubts of ever being fit for service again. Sir Marcus allows me to hope—but that is all."

"Bad, bad! Hard enough to rise, with every chance; but to lose all this time, and have to begin afresh after all, is very poor work. Why not strike out a new line at once? Do you want to make a living, or are you content with what you have?"

"You press me hard, Mr. Bourne; but as I know you mean kindly, I will own I am very anxious to make money, and am only waiting for health to come to a decision for the future. I feel painfully the drain I am on my mother's slender income; even though we make a joint purse, I am sure to get the lion's share."

"And your mother—charming woman, and well-informed, I am

sure—is not a good woman of business, and what she seems to be convinced of one day, she goes and overturns the next. I hope you look well into your affairs yourself, and trust no woman, were she ten times your mother, as Hamlet says."

"Suppose we leave my mother out of the question, Mr. Bourne. Are you asking me these things out of friendly curiosity, or what?"

"Out of good will to you, and a sense of duty elsewhere. In these days it is hard work to get on without a push at the right moment; and that push I may be able to give you, if you will decide to give up the army, and come into my house of business. Sir Marcus tells me you are a good scholar and accountant; for both those qualifications I could guarantee good pay, with the prospect later of increasing any capital you may throw into the concern. And if you want a friendly welcome in town, to dinner, or so forth, we shall be glad to see you, my wife and I—and you know what a hand she is at petting anyone's ailments. Think this over at your leisure, and let me know before I go. We leave on Monday."

Mr. Bourne walked out of the library with the firm tread of a man who feels he has done a liberal thing, and extricated himself from a difficulty besides. The young man remained where he left him, sunk in a weary reverie, from which he felt no power to rise. His mother's step, and her touch on his shoulder, recalled him.

"I am ashamed of being so lazy, when you must be tired. Come and sit down by the fire, and tell me your adventures. You look as if you had seen a ghost, dear mother."

"Worse than that, Ernest—and better. I have talked with evil and good, but both were of flesh and blood. Dear boy, you never told me you had any dealings with that dangerous man."

"You have seen him, then? Don't mind anything he says or threatens. I am prepared, through the kindness of our friends here; and I never meant you to know how much your wise son had been taken in. He has only helped me to make up my mind. Have you been of any use to Miss Wilmot?"

"I hope so. Poor girl, she has suffered a great deal, and Mr. Bourne's ungentlemanly conduct last night was inexcusable. I could not be severe on her subterfuge, considering how she was placed, but she is terribly ashamed and penitent."

"Penitence implies amendment, does it not?"

"Well, you would not have doubted her, had you heard her story. She may have been foolish, been carried away by vanity, and love of admiration; but she seems to have an affectionate heart, and, unless I am much mistaken, it is very sore on your account."

"It can never be as sore as mine has been on hers. Mother, I have been thinking it all over, and am afraid you have felt as if you had not been treated with confidence. But my dream was broken before I could have told it—so rudely broken that I could not revive it now, if I would."

"And you would not now, if you could? I am not much surprised. But, my boy, is it quite certain that you did not go so far as to make her a sharer in the dream?"

"I never spoke of it to her; or to anyone. I was not sufficient master of myself to prevent my love from being discovered. She herself found it out, and she let me think, in an insane moment, that I could gratify her by doing what I had better have left undone: the taking part in the steeple-chase. But I had no more to offer her then than I have now."

"I shall not attempt to plead her cause, Ernest; only do her this justice—I do not think she knew her own heart then as she knows it now; and she is wiser by a year's experience. And her prospects are good, though her fortune is small."

"I hope they are good—much better than what your kindness would plan, mother. And, as my prospects may interest you more, what do you say to my giving up the army, and accepting a proposal made me this morning?"

He related what had passed. She listened with a cruel pang at her heart, knowing it would be madness to throw away such a chance of deliverance from their difficulties. Moreover, she was shrewd enough to discern in the offer an inclination on the part of Cecilia's guardian to further her wishes; and there might be a prospect of a possible succession to the business.

"He will be miles away from the other, and will in time forget her; their acquaintance has been very short, and nothing serious can have arisen in their hearts yet. Adela is worth much more than poor Cecilia, but it is not always those excellent creatures that men care for most; and she may have no prospects. It is better as it is."

Better as it is! Did Mrs. Archdale read aright the glow of hope and earnestness that had begun to light up his eyes, so dim and sunken an hour before, as if now he saw a way opening to what had before looked unattainable? Her own sense of mortification and disappointment at his failure to follow the profession she had been so proud to see him choose—the only one she deemed fit for the last representative of an old warrior line—made her less observant than usual. She was tormented, moreover, with the remembrance of Dangerfield's insinuations; and with the debate, so often maintained between her pride and her honour, whether she could bring herself to own to her son a certain deed she had done; done, as she believed, for the good of both. Before she could decide on any such momentous step, an interruption put it out of the question. Voices were talking eagerly in the hall; and presently Cecilia's rose above the rest.

"Mrs. Archdale! where are you? Have you heard?"

Mrs. Archdale opened the door. In the hall, stood an eager, excited group, appealing to her, as being the bearer of Cosmo

Dangerfield's message. Did she think, or suspect, that anyone followed her to Miss Granard's?

The very idea made Mrs. Archdale shudder; and the thought in Cecilia's mind communicated itself to her own—there was either some power at work which she, Cecilia, could not fathom, or she had been made his instrument, perhaps the subject of his secret scorn. She looked with terror at Adela's face of anguish, rigid with the efforts she made to keep calm and collected, and involuntarily turned to see where Ernest was. He was behind her, and had seen that face too. He stepped forward with a decision that commanded attention.

"Miss Granard, this shall be looked to directly. A fellow who has dared so to treat my mother—and you—puts himself out of the pale of consideration; he can only be hunted down. Useless as I am, I shall do my part, and I know I can answer for my mother will. Frankland—Miss Combermere—you will help us, knowing the country. I am not the least afraid of the cold, if you can find me the carriage and horses. Let me but come up with that scoundrel, and I will teach him he has made a mistake."

"Not such a mistake as your going would be, my fine fellow," said the Archdeacon, "unless you took the ambulance with you. Driving after the scoundrel, as you mildly term him, would be easy enough with good horses, if one knew where he went to; but that coach may drop him anywhere, and he may strike across country to throw us off the trail."

"If he does, Archdeacon, we shall know it. He has a beagle on his traces, who will never lose the scent. He did not follow up my mother more closely than Paul is following him. I have been wondering why the boy did not come back, and now I know; but no one but myself would understand the signals he will leave behind him, and whoever goes in pursuit, must endure having me for his companion."

The Archdeacon thought there might be something in this; that the exertion might, after all, do him good. But nothing could be done until Sir Marcus came in. Meanwhile, we will follow those, about whose proceedings all are so anxious.

If it was in some sense a triumph for Cosmo Dangerfield to carry off his step-daughter in defiance of her friends, he was not long in discovering that he had undertaken an onerous task. He had followed Mrs. Archdale to Mrs. Keith's that he might be on the spot, should any opening occur for a negotiation; flattering himself that if he could but obtain a personal interview with Miss Granard, he should win her over, as others had been won. His previous inspection of the premises had shown him the garden door in the wall, and he was vaguely speculating on the possibility of accomplishing an entrance that way, when he heard the sound of young voices on the other side, and soon after, a ball flew over into the whitened grass.

He saw his chance, and waited; and as the sight of his face paralysed Emily's tongue at once, he had no difficulty in getting rid of her companion, and then taking her with him. A few sternly spoken words were enough to enforce obedience; the only resistance she offered was on behalf of the dog, which she had clasped in her arms, and would not relinquish. He complied with the whim, it might be a means of controlling her later, and he carried her through the thickest part of the snowdrift, dog and all. Her silence rather alarmed him, and the peril of his attempt began to damp his ardour. The sight of the coach, which he had heard spoken of the evening before, decided him at once. He seated himself inside with the child; fortunately for his plans, they had it all to themselves, and he thought it expedient to adopt a more conciliatory and paternal tone. He hoped she was not cold or wet; caressed Coco (who snapped at him in return), talked of the snowballing, the sliding, the skating, he had seen, and the nice journey they were going to take together, in the very way he imagined would amuse a child—but in vain. She sat holding her dog, and looking straight before her, without seeming to hear what he said, or to heed his presence. He had told the guard to pick up his portmanteau at the station, and leaned out of the window a few moments to make sure of his property. In that interval came a ray of comfort to his prisoner, for a joyful spring on Coco's part drew her eyes to the other window, where, for two seconds only, gleamed the eager eyes and white teeth of Paul Rocket.

Without in the least understanding how he could be there, she accepted the fact with the simplicity of her nature; and when the Professor resumed his seat, and glanced anxiously up at her face, he saw in it a change. The pale cheeks had a tinge of colour; and, though she did not look at him, a quiet smile played on her lips, as she repeated something to herself which he could not hear.

"If she has learned to despise and scoff at me, and at all she used to be afraid of, I shall have to take her education in hand again," he thought, raging inwardly with a sensation almost approaching to fear of the helpless being by his side. It was strange that it should be so. The more composed and serene she looked, the more uneasy he grew; and he took an opportunity, as the coach was moving slowly up a long hill, with whitened fields on either side, to make an experiment upon her nerves.

"Have the spirits been near you lately, Emily?"

He knew how to modulate his voice, so as to give solemnity to the question, and he saw a tremor pass over her small frame. But the answer was quite unexpected.

"There are more with us than with them," said Emily. The words were evidently a familiar phrase; indeed, they were what she had been repeating to herself the last half-hour.

"I told you, my child, that wherever you went I should be able

to follow you. Those who are constantly watching you cannot be kept out by walls or bolts."

"They can't do anything," said the child, dreamily. "I have one of my own to take care of me. My father sent him on purpose."

"Indeed? And what can he do for you?"

"I don't know, but I think he is here."

She was so unlike what she had used to be under his influence, that he hardly knew how to proceed; and remained for some time plunged in silence. When the coach stopped, about half way to its destination, he ordered some refreshments to be brought, and insisted on Emily's partaking of them; which she did, though it was plain she had very little appetite. The pleasure of feeding Coco was some compensation for compliance; and soon after, the entrance of two more passengers broke up their privacy—a relief much greater to the man than to the child.

The town where the coach finally stopped was a junction for two lines of railway, and contained several large inns. It was dark when the travellers alighted; and with some little difficulty Dangerfield procured a fly, desiring the driver to take them to the hotel nearest to the station. Here he ordered some dinner in a private sitting-room, and confided to the civil hostess that he had just fetched his daughter from school to see her mother, who was dangerously ill; that the poor girl's nerves were very delicate, and that she must be kept perfectly quiet. By some mistake, they had left her roll of cloaks behind, and he must go out to procure something to defend her from the cold—would she take charge of her till his return, and neither leave her alone, nor allow anyone to come near her? The good woman willingly consented, and in the warmth of her sympathy lavished kindnesses on poor Emily and Coco—brought them tea and toast from her own table, and praised the child for her courage and goodness in keeping up, so as not to distress her dear papa.

"I don't quite know what to make of her," she told her husband afterwards; "she is not like any child I ever saw; it is my belief she is not quite right in her head. She told me just now that she never was alone, because her father sent some one to take care of her. Poor lamb! it is plain enough what that must mean."

She was not the only person perplexed by Emily's behaviour. The passive resignation with which she submitted, without appearing to think of escape, was easily accounted for, her stepfather thought, by the habit of obedience, combined with fear. But, knowing how often he had cowed her with a look, and seen her crouch with terror at his entrance, it was strange to him to find her large dreamy eyes turned full upon his own, as if studying every thought of his brain; and instead of shrinking from his gaze, almost quelling his courage by the steadiness of hers.

It was not a child's look. A child, such as he knew her to be, would either have fretted, or drooped, or been frightened. What

spirit could it be that gleamed in those eyes? Had he tampered with a power that was being turned against himself? Was there more truth in the unseen than he had ever believed, while profiting by the terrors it excited? Had this frail and delicate organisation, which he had thought to be entirely at his mercy, become the medium by which a supernatural agency was preparing to bear him down?

Like many unprincipled men, who have thriven by deceiving others, he was on some points liable to deceive himself; and more than once had a doubt crossed his mind whether he were not venturing on dangerous ground. But he had never felt really afraid before; and the sensation was so insupportable that he drank more wine than he ought, considering the fiery nature of the vintage; and then, calling for his bill, announced his intention of starting for London by the next train. Instead of doing so, however, he took tickets for the town of X. in the Midland Counties, where they would arrive about one in the morning; hoping thus to baffle pursuit, and intending to make all speed to the metropolis the following day.

He had understood that they were in a "through" carriage, but, about ten o'clock, was disagreeably roused by a summons to alight, and change for X. The night was dark, as the moon had not risen, and there was a considerable amount of confusion on the platform. The line had to be crossed by a bridge; and as the Professor was descending the steps, holding Emily's hand, he suddenly found his foot entangled in a cord. Before he could extricate himself, a violent jerk had flung him forward, so that he fell head foremost to the foot of the stairs.

Of course, in the darkness and confusion, people stumbled over him, and abused him for being there. The other train had just come up; haste must be made; and a porter came running to the assistance of the fallen gentleman, who was almost stunned, and bleeding from a cut on the forehead. Being urged to exert himself, or he would be left behind, he contrived to stagger to the platform, and was assisted into a carriage; when, his recollection returning, he started up, asking where his little girl was—a young lady in a cloak, carrying a dog. Who had seen her?

The porter ran to enquire, and came back to say a young lady had been seen looking rather lost, and was safe in another carriage. There was no time for more, as the train swept on; and the Professor fell into an uneasy doze—the combined result of the wine and the accident. When he was roused again by the summons to alight, he hurried along the platform in quest of Emily.

She was nowhere to be seen.

(*To be continued.*)

THOMAS ARNOLD.

IT was the year 1795. The atmosphere of Europe was full of the sparks and the smoke that burst from the vast explosion of the French Revolution. There was a thrill, at once, of great triumph and great horror in men's hearts; of triumph, at the rush of free thought that was sweeping through the nations, of horror at the hideous mask liberty was putting on in Paris. In London drawing-rooms, where eyes and wit were bright, in quiet English country homes, where the hay-scented air breathed softly and the children's laughter rang, the talk was of nothing but the Queen of France in her beauty and her agony, and the blood that was washing the scaffold in the French capital. The streets of our cities were filled with French refugees, with scanty purses but overflowing tongues; men paused in the business of the factory or the desk to watch, with bated breath, for the next scene in the world's drama. It was on a June day of this year of stir and tumult that Thomas Arnold was born at West Cowes.

Thomas Arnold's father was a collector of customs. He does not seem to have had much to do with forming the character of his son, nor could he indeed have had much to do with it, for he died when the boy was but six years old. His mother may very likely have had her share, as all true mothers have, in breathing religion into her son's whole being. The affection between the two was very strong in after life, and when Arnold founded for himself a home, his mother was the first woman who entered there as queen.

But whatever may have been the influence of his parents upon his early mind, the time in which his first years were lived must certainly have given a strong colouring to Thomas Arnold's heart and soul, that was to show itself plainly in his future story. It was a time of breaking down old prejudices, for light to stream into dark places; a time for the waking up to the sense of long-neglected duty, a time of life springing out of death; of death coming, at last, on what should be dead. No wonder that, in after days, Thomas Arnold, the child of this era, the child growing up with all the vast intellectual power which was in future to characterise the man unfolding daily within him, became a foremost hero in the grand army that would fling down the false and set up the standard of the true.

Thomas Arnold was very soon to begin to see something of the realities of life. His mother was not a woman to keep her son long swaddled in home indulgences, and fettered by narrow home habits; and so, at the early age of eight, she sent him to a school in Wiltshire. There he quickly began to make a way of his own for himself. He was a bright earnest boy, with a brain which darted rapidly

down into any study he took in hand; with a swift fancy which could find its road to the plains before Troy, or the field of Marathon; with limbs which revelled in each daring sport. At twelve he was removed to Winchester School, where he journeyed quickly upward from form to form. He had a mental digestion of capacious power. Every book which the lad read seemed to do exactly what it ought to do for his mind.

In due time, young Arnold exchanged Winchester for Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His intellectual strength now showed itself yet more markedly than it had hitherto done. There was a freshness about his mind that gave it something of the nature of a breeze coming straight from mountain tops; however worn out an idea might be, it always got a touch of newness when he handled it. His tone of thought was free and bold, and yet deeply religious; he did not shrink from grappling with each problem of faith, or of human life, and would not let the giants go until they had left a blessing behind them. His favourite classical studies while at Oxford were Herodotus and Thucidydes: he read them over and over, until the styles of the old Greek authors became, as it were, familiar melodies in his mind, and until he formed a plan for one day writing a great history himself.

Arnold made many college friends among the young men of his own age, and among them were some whose names were to be much spoken of in future years. We can picture to ourselves the genial joys of those hours of companionship when Keble talked of things divine, or chatted of his home and his two well-loved sisters, Elizabeth the grave, and Mary Anne the gay, or when Whately's words were rich and luminous.

Arnold had always meant to enter the Church: therefore, as soon as he left Oxford, he was ordained deacon, and went to live at Laleham, near Staines and Chertsey. There he helped his brother-in-law in a school for young boys, and assisted in parish duties. At first, his mother, and sister, and aunt lived with him at Laleham, but before long even his mother had to make way for a yet dearer and nearer home princess. He wooed and won Miss Penrose, the daughter of an old north-country family, and brought her back to Laleham as his bride. He could not have chosen better, even if he had known the story of his future life beforehand. She had a mind that could fully comprehend and sympathise with his own: she had a grace which could gather round her, in a charmed circle, all the men of high intellect who in days to come were to cross his threshold, treading it as dear familiar ground; she had a heart which, in its breadth and depth of womanly tenderness, would be able to take in, and warm, all the just budding young lives that his calling in after days would draw within her gracious, motherly influence; she had a soul as firmly anchored as his own on faith and hope eternal; she had a love for him which would keep his memory

green in the affections of a rising generation, and teach it to look up to him with fond, reverent eyes, long after he had gone to his home above. Who that has visited at Fox Howe, in days but lately gone by, can forget the handsome old lady, so queenly in her age, and yet so girl-like in her interest in each passing subject, and her warm sympathy for each joy and sorrow? A beautiful link between past and present; resting there, with the man who had been the love of her youth still enshrined in her heart, with her lips so ready to tell of what had been, with her calm eyes looking so hopefully towards the coming time.

The employment of teaching in his brother-in-law's school soon began to bring out, and develope, in Arnold his especial vocation for instructing and influencing the young. He found that he not only preferred this work to any other, but that it gave more play than any other to all his best powers of heart and mind. He seemed never to weary of it, and he added to his school-boy charges private pupils of his own. After a while, these latter became so interesting to him, and so entirely engrossed him, that he gave up all connection with his brother-in-law's school, and devoted himself to the task of preparing young men for college. He did not, however, cease to help in visiting in the parish. There were fragments of time which he could give to such work, and Thomas Arnold was a man whose day could never be too full. Arnold's pleasure in the companionship of youths just stepping from boyhood into manhood, and in helping them to build up their characters and open their intellects, was most real and entire. He did his duty towards them with a will, because his whole heart was in it. He loved the elastic activity of their limbs, and the sparkling overflow of their spirits, and the freshness of their minds, and quickness of their feelings. In all of this there was something which corresponded to his own nature. Mrs. Arnold was heart and soul with her husband in his work. Her tact rounded off many an angle in the connection between tutor and pupils. She spread over the young men in their daily life a nameless, yet all-pervading influence, that kept the moral atmosphere of the house pure and high; she breathed into them a reverence for home, a "faith in womankind," which probably stayed with many of them throughout their whole lives.

As we look back at Arnold's life, at this period, the picture we see is very busy and very bright. Now he was sitting by the bed of an old woman in the workhouse, filling the little room with the sunshine of his brisk kindliness and cheery piety. Now he was in his study, with a group of eager young faces round him, turning Greek and Latin sentences hither and thither as easily as his glove. Now he was in the pulpit, making the stately oratory of the race of the eighteenth century divines—hardly yet extinct—seem very cold and lifeless, as the reality of his religion flashed out in voice and glance, and told of a daily walk with God, which was a better sermon still. But the

liveliest scene of all, the scene most strange to eyes accustomed to associate the title of tutor with grave donnish ways and ponderous pedantic airs, was when, of an afternoon, he took a walk with his pupils, or joined them in their games and sports, in the broad enclosure, half shrubbery, half lawn, that stretched behind the large, old-fashioned house in which Mr. and Mrs. Arnold lived. Then the master ran and leapt with the best of them; then his full clear laughter rang through the frosty winter air, or the summer twilight, and his whole being flung itself out in a burst of joyous life.

This entire unbending with his pupils was one of the outward and visible signs of Thomas Arnold's nature. There was nothing so antagonistic to him as the dry bones of old external forms. The most marked feature of his character was its downright, uncompromising reality. He wanted to break down everything that was false, and hollow, in life and society. The only failing in others for which, in his large-hearted breadth of feeling, he had no toleration, was gilded pretence.

But Arnold was not always to remain in his comparatively narrow and easy sphere of duty at Laleham. His Master had more arduous work prepared for him, and all the while he had been teaching others, he had in reality been training for it. The head-mastership of Rugby School fell vacant, and Arnold, led by his love of guiding and influencing the young, and probably feeling himself, in this his zenith of bodily and intellectual strength, fully equal to the great work, sent in his testimonials for the post among many others. One of these testimonials said: "If Mr. Arnold gets the situation, he will change the whole system of public school education in England."

Most likely these emphatic words, joined to the reputation he had gained as a private tutor, determined the choice of those who held in their hands the appointment to the office, for one day Thomas Arnold found himself head-master of Rugby School. His pupils, many of whom had been for a long while beneath his roof, were taken leave of; the old women in the workhouse heard for the last time the music of their friend's footstep; the house, and the walks, round which hung so many dear associations connected with his early married life, had his lingering gaze once more fastened upon them in wistful fondness. And then Laleham was left, and the first chapter of his life was ended.

On his appointment to the head-mastership of Rugby School, Arnold took his D.D. degree, and from that time he was chiefly called in public by the name by which we best know him, Dr. Arnold.

The beginning of Dr. Arnold's reign at Rugby was marked by something of gloom and discontent among both the boys and those connected with them. He looked much deeper down into the character of each individual member of the school than it had been the custom of former head-masters to do; and when, on closely

watching a boy, he saw that he exercised a bad influence over his companions, he quietly requested his friends to remove him as unfit for public school life; thus, as may easily be supposed, causing dissatisfaction in many quarters.

Arnold's face had also, probably, something to do with his winning his way slowly, at first, with the boys. When he was very much in earnest about anything, his features would wear a serious gravity of expression, which the very young easily mistook for sternness; and when he had his first interview with a lad, on his arrival at school, he was always most deeply in earnest at the thought of the new charge confided to him, and this made his appearance frighten his scholars a little on first seeing him. Gradually, however, these drawbacks to his popularity faded away; parents found that he had judged rightly for their sons in changing their sphere of education, and the boys learned that their head-master's face could twinkle with fun, and soften with paternal tenderness, and that there were in him depths of kindly sympathy for their young troubles and difficulties, and stores of genial strength, such as they had never dreamt of in man. Soon the common expression in the school about the head-master came to be among the boys, "We would die for him." The only fault which he would never pardon was a lie—that was always punished by immediate expulsion from the school. This severe respect for truth, however, increased, on the whole, his ascendency: for a lofty sense of honour, a manly straightforwardness, are always essential qualities in an English boy's ideal hero.

What words can paint the bright energy, the life-giving power, the breadth of high endeavour, the ceaseless fight for good, the victories gained for all things pure and lovely, which mark the story of Arnold's rule at Rugby? Who can describe the clinging love, the proud identifying themselves with all he said and wrote, the feeling for which, perhaps, worship is the only word, that glowed in the hearts of the boys towards their master? Even now pictures of those years rise up before us. We see the school chapel, with twilight shadows gathering in the aisles, and with young faces gazing up, in reverent love, at a tall brave form that quivers with strong feeling. We hear a voice that thrills with the very weight of its own earnestness. We see the sixth form, those helpers whom he made for himself in all good work in the school, kneeling round him, as he offers up a prayer which he said daily with them in private after the public prayers were ended, and which, even when we read it to-day, seems to stretch up to heaven in its intensity. We see him, on Communion Sundays, bending over those whom he has brought early to the holy rite, and the boys, as they look up, see almost a mother's tenderness in their master's eyes.

And now a more animated scene is before us. The Doctor's study wears the air of a court of justice to-day; he himself sits in the middle of a little eager group; there has been a dispute among the

boys, and he must set it right. What grave kindliness there is in his tone, as he speaks to that timid little fellow, whose words seem so difficult to find; and yet what command there is in his glance, as he silences with a look that lively young gentleman who apparently thinks no one is to say anything but himself; how quickly, and yet how clearly, does he unravel the whole matter! One boy begins to confirm his own words by many asseverations, but the head-master stops him speedily, by the quiet decisive formula always used by him when a lad wants to assert his truthfulness: "If you say it, that is enough." No wonder that the boy says afterwards to his companions, as they all in like cases have often said—for it was a common saying at Rugby about their master—"It is impossible to tell Arnold a lie, for he always believes a fellow."

But we must hasten on, and pause no longer even in scenes like these.

Dr. Arnold's work at Rugby was of so weighty a kind, that mind and body could not have gone on with it without relaxation coming at tolerably frequent intervals. He took several continental tours, in which his limbs rejoiced in the breezes that bound over Alpine peaks, and his intellect found playwork for itself in dreaming among fallen columns in the Forum. Before many years were passed, however, he began to want a place of rest and refreshment nearer home, and so he bought Fox Howe, a pretty country house between Rydal and Ambleside. There most of the vacations were spent by him and his family, and there spirits of lake and mountain whispered to him softly as he sat at his desk, and genial friends came to share his summer repose, or sit by his Christmas fireside.

Arnold was constantly before the public as an author. There were his volumes of sermons, and other theological books, and there was his Roman history, all of which proclaimed to the world the incessant mental activity of the man. His voice and pen were always on the side of civil and religious liberty. Everything that was narrow, or dark, or dead, was contrary to his nature, and roused a spirit of opposition in him; his religion was essentially a living religion, and he wanted to breathe it into all society, from the highest to the lowest. The hollow glitter of the fine lady whose story was all rouge and scandal: the ponderous emptiness of the divine whose story was all heavy rhetoric and struggle for worldly advancement: the gilded death of the man of name and title, whose story was all well-turned speeches and well-dressed dinners, while not a child on his estates could spell a Bible verse, not a cottage was as weather-tight as my lord's dog kennels—all these things, which were woven into the daily life of the England of the eighteenth century, did Arnold, and those who in and since his time have worked in the spirit and fought with the weapons of Arnold, come to free us from. He was one of the first and the greatest in the great army, and so we do especial honour to his name.

Though Arnold's life was so full and rich in many great results, it was, in the years it numbered upon earth, comparatively but a short one. His 48th birthday was almost come, when one June Saturday night he lay down, after having written in his diary words which told of the brave warfare of a humble Christian soldier. He never rose again; an incipient heart disease suddenly did its worst, and before the Sabbath bells rang out he was listening to the angels' music.

ALICE KING.

In Memoriam. Prince Waldemar.

MARCH 27, 1879.

"GOOD-NIGHT!"

I.

Good-night! little voice that is still,
Eyes closed to the sun!
Young soldier, whose arms are laid down
Ere the time came to fight.
Had God spared you to stop with us till
Life's war was begun,
You had fought with your father's renown—
But He called you! Good-night!

II.

Scarce yet on the air dies away
The musical song
Of Bridal, that promised to put
Sad winter to flight,
When Death, grudging Joy her short day,
Crept swiftly along,
With pitiless fingers, to shut
The blue eyes. Good-night!

III.

Good-night, little Prince! you have known
But a decade of years,
With Love's ready meed of reward,
Scant censure or sŏrrow:
In the home whence your gladness has flown
Rain the parents' sad tears—
God grant the Hereafter afford
You a happy Good Morrow!

G. B. STUART.

A LEGACY OF GRATITUDE.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER I.

IN THE MOUNTAINS.

ARTHUR FORESTER was the dearest friend of my youth. He and I were school-boys together, and after that we were chums at college. We took our degrees at the same time, and then bade each other a long farewell, my path in life taking me in one direction and his in another. I am now—what I little thought to be in those days—Sir George Raymund, of Grantley Towers, while Forester is still nobody in particular. But, for all that, a year never passes without our seeing something of each other: Arthur seldom misses a fortnight's shooting at the Towers in September.

Although from a pecuniary point of view there was no necessity for doing anything of the kind, yet my father insisted that after I left college I should devote some time to the study of one or other of the professions. The choice was left to me. My father, Squire Raymund, as he was called by courtesy, used to say that he never knew what freaks fortune might play him or his, or what necessity might ultimately arise for his son to earn his own living. Full of a restless, intellectual activity, and not in any case the kind of man to settle down to the quiet humdrum life of a country squire, I offered no objection to my father's wishes, but, very considerably to his surprise and chagrin, made the profession of medicine the object of my choice. Three years later, after going through the usual curriculum in London and Paris, I became a fully qualified surgeon.

My father was delighted to find that one of his pet theories had worked out to so successful an issue. My diploma was framed and glazed and hung over the chimney-piece of his private room, and his son was granted two years' leave of absence to see the world.

At this time the probability that I should ever succeed to the family title and estates was a remote one. They were held by Sir Marmaduke Raymund, a cousin of my father. He was married and had one son. The estates were strictly entailed, and went with the title. No intercourse was kept up between the two branches of the family; and at the time I went abroad for my two years' holiday I had never even seen Grantley Towers, the family seat: nor was I the sort of man to trouble my head with any ambitious dreams of what a remote future might, by some faint possibility, have in store for me.

The breach between Sir Marmaduke and my father was a wide one, and one there seemed no possibility of bridging over. There

had been a quarrel between them, when they were young men about town, in which some lady's name was mixed up, and from that day forward they had carefully avoided each other's society. My father, although he would have been the last to admit it, was a man of strong prejudices, and his dislike to his cousin seemed to grow in intensity as he himself grew in years.

But if half the information which reached Larch Cottage respecting the baronet and his "carryings on" had upon it the stamp of truth, then was Sir Marmaduke a man whom few beyond his immediate associates could either like or respect. At once a debauchee and a spendthrift, his life was a perpetual outrage on the social decencies of English life. Very few of his own class would now visit him or even acknowledge him. Years ago his wife had refused to live with him any longer. She and her son were residing at a little country house in Hampshire, which had been left her by her father. It could not but add to the bitterness of her cup to know that another was installed in her place as mistress of Grantley Towers. Then there were complaints of rents being raised without rhyme or reason, and of tenants taken unfair advantage of in every possible way; of farm buildings allowed to fall into disrepair, of timber cut down recklessly and wastefully, of orgies held by night in the Towers itself, which could only be spoken of with bated breath. Altogether, Sir Marmaduke seemed to be a very choice specimen of what an English gentleman ought *not* to be.

It so happened that, during my stay abroad, Sir Marmaduke lost both wife and child. They had died of a malignant fever within a few weeks of each other. By this event many conceived that my prospects in life were materially altered. I did not think so. My uncle was only forty-five years of age, and it was just as likely as not that he would one day marry again. Indeed it was more than likely that he would do so; less, perhaps, to please himself than to spite those who might otherwise look forward to being benefited by his son's death. With such a man you could never predict from one day to another what he might or might not choose to do.

This much by way of introduction. Now for my story.

During my two years' leave of absence, I one day found myself travelling from Sicily on my way to Naples, and landed at Reggio, a port in Calabria.

I heard a good deal about the brigands and their outrages on travellers, more especially foreigners, at every place at which I stayed; but knowing the proneness of the middle and lower classes of Italians to exaggerate even in the most trivial concerns of daily life, I naturally struck off quite fifty per cent. from the accounts that reached me, and then doubted how much might be true and how much false of what was left. I heard vaguely of travellers whose throats had been cut, because the ransom set upon them by their captors was not forth-

coming in time; but I quite failed in my endeavours to trace out any authentic case of the kind. That, occasionally, a foreigner had been pounced upon and carried off to the hills, to be ransomed by his friends, after a greater or lesser amount of ill-treatment by his captors, was undoubtedly true. That audacious robberies, often in broad daylight, were of almost weekly occurrence in one or the other of the little towns, could not be disputed; but whether all such cases should have been laid at the door of the brigands was a point that was certainly open to doubt.

Hearing so much of these rogues and their misdeeds, many travellers might have gone away with the opinion that the country was in a perpetual state of fever and unrest. But such an opinion would certainly have been a one-sided one. In Calabria, at that time, brigandage had almost arrived at the respectability pertaining to a national institution. It began to have about it the sweet savour of antiquity. The memories of the younger generation could not stretch back to a time when brigandage was not; and I have no doubt that there were not wanting persons, otherwise honestly disposed, who would have looked upon it as an ill day for their country when the last band of ruffians should be hunted down and exterminated.

In any case, I felt little or no fear on my own score. I went about my avocations pretty well as I had done elsewhere. I made long excursions on foot from whatever place happened to be my head-quarters at the time, and sketched and botanized to my heart's content, taking little heed of the frequent warnings that were poured into my ears. However, I was destined to pay for my temerity, if temerity it could be called: a fact I doubted at the time, and sometimes doubt still. Truth to tell, in my secret heart I was by no means disinclined for an encounter with the brigands. I felt sure that they had been painted much blacker than they really were; and although I was by no means desirous of paying a heavy sum by way of ransom, I had a secret hankering for seeing these redoubtable rogues in their own wild homes among the hidden places of the hills, of studying them close at hand, and of thereby being able to strike a balance for myself between the truth and the falsehood of the many tales I had heard.

One day, when out sketching in a lonely part of the country, I was pounced upon by three villainous looking wretches, each of whom was armed with a gun and three or four long knives. Their first proceeding was to cover me with their guns, and their next to bid me stand up. While two of them still kept their guns pointed straight at me, the third man tied my hands behind me with a piece of whip-cord. Then my eyes were lightly bandaged with my own handkerchief, my hat was stuck on the back of my head, and, after an admonitory prick from the sharp point of a knife, I was told to move on. Matters were hardly as comfortable as I had hoped they would be in such a contingency.

We began at once to ascend, and we kept on ascending for more than three hours. We were doubtless climbing one of the many winding paths that led into the recesses of the hills. Whenever the path was more than ordinarily rough and stony, two of my captors took me, one by each arm, and helped me over the difficulties of the road. And so we slipped and stumbled slowly forward, till I felt thoroughly worn out, besides which my wrists pained me terribly. If my captors took the trouble to think at all, I don't suppose the idea ever entered their minds that there was any element of cruelty in their treatment of me. It was not that they were wilfully unkind towards me, it was only that they were callous and had no feeling for anyone but themselves.

The sun must have set some time, and had I not been walking so quickly I should have felt how keen was the mountain air, when a halt was called, and the first part of our journey came to an end. We had heard a peculiar whistle a few minutes previously, to which one of our company had responded, and we were now joined by two more men. I should fail to tell how thankful I was to be allowed to sit down, although my seat was nothing more than the unbarked stem of a tree placed under a sheltering lee of rock. Then my wrists were unbound, to my intense relief, and I was further comforted by being told that the slightest attempt to escape would have the effect of putting a bullet through my heart. In a little while a crust of black bread was given to me, together with a piece of goat's flesh, and I was told that I could have as much water as I chose to drink. I was thankful for the bread and water, but the goat's flesh was so rancid that I could not eat a morsel of it.

All this time my eyes were kept bandaged. The men made a rough meal after their own fashion, after which they sat for upwards of an hour, smoking and telling tales, round a fire which they had improvised in a sheltered corner among the rocks. From their conversation I gathered that they were waiting for the moon to rise before proceeding on their way, and in effect, in about two hours' time from first calling a halt, we were once more on the road. My hands were again tied, and we began once more our never-ending ascent.

The air was now piercingly cold. I felt as if I had neither nose nor ears left. But everything has an end, and after two of the longest hours that I ever spent, we reached the brigand chief's headquarters for the time being. I heard a confused hubbub of voices, but my senses were too numbed and wearied to allow of my heeding or caring for anything. I was led into a small cavern or opening in the rocks, whether natural or artificial I cannot say; my eyes and hands were unbound, a bundle of dried grass was flung me for a bed, and I was left alone. My last conscious effort was to nestle down among the welcome grass, after which everything was a blank till morning.

I was awakened by some one pushing me roughly with his foot, and bidding me get up. I sprang to my feet, rubbed my eyes, and looked round. It took me a minute or two to collect my wandering wits,

and call to mind what had befallen me. I ached in every limb, and I limped rather than walked out of the cave into the open air. There a strange sight met my gaze. A number of men, some twenty perhaps in all, were scattered about a small green plateau that was shut in by steep rocks in every direction. In one corner was a fire, but a fire that smoked very little, over which was an iron tripod, with a huge cauldron suspended from it by a hook and chain.

Some of the men were smoking and chattering among themselves; others were playing cards; others, again, lay asleep in the morning sun, wrapped round in their warm sheepskin cloaks. One or two men, assisted by some women, were making preparations for a morning meal.

I had not more than a few seconds wherein to note the scene around me before I found myself face to face with the brigand chief. He was a powerfully-built man, fully six feet high, and would have been deemed eminently handsome, after the Italian style of good looks, but for a lowering, suspicious expression about his eyes, and a cruel hardness about the lines of his mouth. His eyes, hair, and beard were coal-black. He had a thin, aquiline nose, with nostrils as fine and delicate as those of a girl—a feature which lent an almost feminine softness to his face in moments of repose. His dress was little better in quality than that of several of his band, but it was whole and clean, and that made an immense difference in his favour. One thing I learned to respect him for afterwards: he had no absolute dislike to soap and water, as every one of the rascals by whom he was surrounded seemed to have. He wore a beautiful English-made gold hunting-watch, of which he was very vain, taking it out and consulting it every quarter of an hour or so during his waking hours. I never discovered, for a certainty, how he became possessed of this pretty toy, but I had strong suspicions thereanent.

Scarcely had this personage put his first question to me before I saw something which told me in a moment in whose presence I was standing. On the forefinger of his right hand he wore a ring, in the hoop of which glowed a ruby of great size and brilliancy. The man before me was evidently none other than Antonio Coroni, one of the most notorious and dreaded brigands of the Calabrian hills, more commonly known as *Il Rubino*, from the ruby which he always wore on the forefinger of his right hand. I had heard many stories about this man. I had been told of his audacious robberies, of the cruelties he was said to have perpetrated whenever he met with opposition, and even of murders which it was alleged could be traced to no other hand than his. I confess that my heart quaked a little when I discovered into whose clutches I had fallen, but I put as bold a front on the situation as my nerves would allow of my doing.

"You are an Englishman, Signor?" was Il Rubino's first question, as with a searching glance he took me in from head to foot.

"I am an Englishman."

I spoke Italian with some degree of fluency in those days, which was so much the better for me as matters turned out afterwards.

"And pray, Signor, what has brought you so far from your own country?"

"A love of travel and adventure. A desire to see strange places and strange people."

"Then the Signor is a gentleman of means? One cannot travel about the world in these days unless one's purse is pretty well lined with gold pieces."

I had unwittingly fallen into a trap. He was about to judge me from my own words, and name some preposterously large sum as the price of my release. Surely, thought I, this is a case in which a little equivocation may be held to be excusable.

"A poor artist who wanders from place to place with his sketch-book, lodging at cheap hostelries, walking across the hills because he can't afford to ride, and selling in winter the pictures he paints in summer, in order that he may live, is not the kind of man likely to be blessed with a heavy purse."

I could see that he was somewhat nonplussed by my answer.

Again his eyes took me in from head to foot. How I thanked my stars that I was dressed in nothing more striking than an ordinary grey travelling suit, and, beyond my watch and chain, had no jewellery about me.

"But the Signor is a gentleman; and gentlemen, even when poor themselves, have always rich relatives. Your father, now ——"

"Is an old soldier no longer capable of bearing arms. He lives in a cottage in the valley where he was born, and cultivates a little patch of ground with his own hands."

All this was strictly true. At one time my father had been a colonel of militia. Larch Cottage, although it had fourteen rooms and plenty of stabling, was still a cottage; and my father was fond of digging every day for an hour or two in his own garden.

"Signor, you are not the son of a common soldier," said Coroni, sternly. "You have the air and manners of a gentleman. Do not attempt to deceive me in this matter, or it may be worse for you in the end. You must have wealthy friends. An uncle for instance ——"

"Whom I have never seen, and who would not do anything to help me out of a difficulty."

"Unless the difficulty were a very serious one, perhaps. But rather than have his nephew's life sacrificed, he would find means to send twenty-five thousand lire wherewith to ransom him."

"I am perfectly sure that he would do nothing of the kind. He cares no more for my life than I care for his."

"That is particularly unfortunate, because unless twenty-five thousand lire are forthcoming by this day fortnight, my children here will be sure to grow impatient and take the affair into their own hands. After that, I could no longer guarantee the Signor's safety. A short

shrift and a bullet through the heart is the method they are acquainted with for disposing of a guest of whose company they are tired."

"So be it. I cannot help it. There is no possibility of my raising any such sum." And I turned aside a little and taking out my tobacco pouch, which, wonderful to relate, they had not despoiled me of, I proceeded to fill my pipe. Of course, my father, rather than sacrifice his only son, would have raised ten thousand pounds, had the necessity for doing so been forced upon him, but there was a strong spice of obstinacy about me, which determined me to fight the question of my ransom inch by inch, and not give way till I saw that I must either do that or lose my life.

Coroni's manner towards me had been studiously courteous and his language that of a man not without education. (I found out afterwards that he had originally been intended for the priesthood and had been trained for three years in a college near Naples.) Now, however, that I turned away from him so abruptly, and he saw to what apparently small purpose he had been talking, his brow lowered ominously, while the corners of his mouth began to twitch as they always did when he was crossed. Turning to two men who stood near, he said something to them in a patois I could not understand. Then the men motioned to me, and I followed them; or rather one went in front of me and one behind. A walk of five minutes through a narrow gorge in the rocks brought us to another but much smaller plateau than the one we had just left, in one corner of which were the freshly-turned mounds of two graves. We three were the only living creatures there. One of the men, turning to me, said with a grim smile, "This is where we find a lodging for those who refuse to do the Capitano's bidding." And with a significant nod of the head, he turned on his heel and we marched back. What I had just seen was by no means calculated to make me feel more comfortable, but the demon of obstinacy still held me in its grip.

"Well?" said Coroni, interrogatively, when I once more stood before him.

"I have nothing more to say than I said before," I answered coldly. "You may murder a man, but you cannot make him do an impossibility. Perhaps you will be good enough to order me some breakfast." And I sat down on a piece of rock and lighted my pipe.

"*Per Bacco!*" cried Coroni, as he started to his feet and shook his clenched fist in the air, "I don't know what it is that stays me from shooting you on the spot. Give the dog some breakfast: it may be the last he will ever eat," he added, turning to his men. Then to me: "I will see you again in an hour's time. If you like to fling your life away, be a fool and do so." With that he strode off and was presently lost to view behind a spur of rock. Five minutes later I saw him romping with a beautiful boy some six years old, and laughing as merrily, while he rolled the child on the grass, as if he

were the happiest of fathers and had never wronged a fellow creature in his life.

Presently some breakfast was brought me, consisting of black bread, milk, and a handful of raisins. The mountain air was keen at that early hour, and my English appetite would have infinitely preferred an English beefsteak; still I did not fail to do justice to the meal, such as it was. While I was still eating I was joined by one of the band, who afterwards proved to be Coroni's lieutenant, Andrea Pinelli, and not a bad sort of fellow for a brigand when you came to know more of him.

"It would seem that the Signor is tired of his life?" he said, as he sat down beside me and began to roll a cigarette.

"Not tired of it by any means," said I; "but I cannot pay a price for it that I do not possess."

"Il Rubino is a most determined man and, sooner or later, is sure to get what he sets his mind on."

"However determined he may be he cannot draw blood from a stone—he cannot make a man pay gold who has none."

"But the Signor's relatives and friends ——?"

"I have already said all that I have to say on that point," I answered, doggedly.

Pinelli shrugged his shoulders and smoked in silence for a minute or two. "What, then, may be the price at which the Signor values his life?" he asked at length, in a sly, insinuating sort of way.

It was my turn to be silent. I pretended to cogitate for a minute or two, although I knew quite well what I was about to say. "Perhaps," I replied at last—"mind, I only say perhaps—my friends might think it worth their while to try to raise six thousand lire if they could see me safe out of this den of thieves."

"Six thousand lire!" he exclaimed contemptuously, and continued smoking. I went on with my breakfast.

"Promise to make it nine thousand, and I will go and talk with the Capitano about it," he whispered in my ear after a minute or two.

"I can make no promises, because my friends might not think my life worth so large a sum."

"But you will write to them and ask them?"

"So be it."

He rose and went in search of Coroni. The result of the negotiation was that the brigand chief agreed to release me on payment of ten thousand lire. If the sum were not forthcoming in a fortnight from the date of my capture, I was politely informed that I should be shot. I confess that I felt relieved at heart when, an hour later, I saw a messenger start with my letter. It was addressed to the nearest consul, with instructions to communicate with my father by the speediest possible means. At that time there was no submarine telegraph, and, in any case, nearly a fortnight must elapse before I could hope to hear from home.

CHAPTER II.

MARIETTA CORONI.

After the messenger was despatched with my letter addressed to the consul, I had nothing to do but look about me and take note of the strange place in which I found myself, and the still stranger company by whom I was surrounded. Coroni himself seemed to shun me. At all events, I saw very little of him during that first day of my captivity. Some of the band were constantly coming and going, by ones, or twos, or threes, but no general movement seemed afoot. Pinelli told me later that recently they had been so worried by the *giandarmi*, and so hunted about from place to place, that Coroni had determined to lie quietly by for a month or two till the troopers should be withdrawn. Every two or three years a spasmodic attempt was made by the government to put down brigandage. A few rogues were shot, a few more were captured and executed in public; then the heat of pursuit gradually relaxed; by-and-by the gendarmes were wanted elsewhere, the brigands crept out of their hiding-places, and the old game began again as if nothing had happened.

The present hiding-place of Coroni's band was a small natural amphitheatre buried amid a range of almost inaccessible rocks. It was reached by two narrow, tortuous defiles known only to the brigands and a few shepherds, at certain points of which a dozen men could have made a stand against a hundred. Coroni had his scouts out for twenty miles round, so that in case of danger he could have had timely warning, and could either have made good his escape or have occupied the best position for defending his camp, as might have seemed wisest under the circumstances. Two sentries were constantly on duty by day and four by night, whose instructions were to shoot me down without mercy should I make the slightest attempt to escape. It soon became evident to me that Coroni had a most thorough control over his men. They loved him and they feared him at the same time. They knew that any day he would risk his own life to save one of theirs, but they knew also the swift and terrible penalty that awaited those who disobeyed his orders. Beneath Coroni's velvet glove there was hidden a hand of steel.

After the first freshness of my adventure had worn itself away, time would have passed but tediously with me during the long days that must elapse before I could hope to hear from England, had I not made it my business to ingratiate myself with the brigand chief's little son, of whom I have made mention previously. Luigi Coroni was at this time about six years old. He was a tall, thin, handsome child, with noble, expressive features and dark flashing eyes. I discovered later on that he was much more like his mother than hi father, both in appearance and disposition, and had about him a

versatility of character and a gay insouciance of disposition which were quite foreign to Coroni himself. In any case, the boy and I soon became fast friends.

One of the earliest acts of my captors had been to relieve me of the contents of my pockets, including, of course, my watch and chain. Among other articles taken from me was a piccolo, an instrument that I had been fond of as a boy and was fond of still. Many an otherwise tedious hour had I wiled pleasantly away, in giving its shrill music to the winds when I had found myself weatherbound in some spot where neither books nor society were to be had.

I now asked Pinelli to give me back my piccolo, which, with Coroni's permission, he did. Luigi had never seen or heard such an instrument before, and went into raptures over it in his impulsive boyish way. It seemed to me that the best thing I could do would be to teach him to play it. He had a true Italian's ear for music and was an apt pupil. In three or four days he had made remarkable progress. His father once or twice growled out something about not splitting his ears all day long with that confounded pipe; but Luigi only laughed and went a dozen yards further away and blew into his piccolo harder than ever.

One day I asked Luigi whether he had learned to draw. He brought a few rude outlines on coarse paper and offered them to me with a blush. Considering that the lad had never had a lesson in his life, and that these were his own untutored efforts, they were not without evidences of latent talent. Again the obliging Pinelli was brought into requisition and asked to restore my sketch-book. To the brigands such an article was of no possible value, and there was no reason why I should not have it back. I thought Luigi would never tire of looking through it. He had that sensitive, artistic temperament which derives pleasure from all creative effort, whether it take the form of a sonato, a picture, a poem, or a goddess in marble. Of course he was still too young to betray more than the merest indications of all this, but the germ of a true artist was in the boy or I was greatly mistaken.

And then what a volatile, mercurial little fellow he was when he got over his first shyness, and how full of laughter, fun, and mischief! He begged of me to draw Pinelli with his big ears, and old Margherita with her witch-like face, and Giacobbe, who walked as if one leg were shorter than the other; and then he took the caricatures, such as they were, and showed them to his father. Next morning I set seriously to work to give him lessons in drawing, and every day after that I devoted two hours to the same object. It was a difficult matter to get him to settle down to one thing for any length of time, but I could always chain him to my side when I told him tales of that wonderful country called Inghilterra—about the big ships that crossed the ocean without sails, and the carriages that travelled without horses, and of those magic wires that flashed

messages from one end of the country to the other, and of that big city called Londra, with its miles of shops and thousands of other wonders. Luigi was never tired of listening when I told him some of the "fairy tales of science," and of what was to be seen in the great world beyond the sea.

After my first interview with him, the morning after my capture, Coroni never came near me for two whole days. On the third morning he unbended so far as to wish me a buon giorno, after which I hardly saw him again for the rest of the day. He had a gloomy and preoccupied air, as though something lay heavily on his mind. What that something was I was destined before long to know.

On the fourth morning after my capture I noticed that when Luigi came to me his eyes looked red, as if he had been crying. "What is the matter, Luigi?" I asked.

"Mamma is so much worse this morning that papa won't let me play my piccolo," he answered, as the tears welled afresh into his eyes.

I was taken aback, and no wonder. This was the first time the lad had spoken to me about his mother; this was the first intimation I had that Coroni had a wife, and that she was there among us.

"What is the matter with your mother?" I asked, after a minute or two.

The boy shook his head. "She is very, very ill," he said. "She broke her wrist about a fortnight ago when the giandarmi were after us, and she has been in dreadful pain ever since."

"But your father has a doctor to attend to her, has he not?" Rather a foolish question to ask, it seemed to me afterwards.

"I don't know anything about that. Papa and Margherita attend to her, and I suppose they know everything."

There was nothing more to be said to Luigi, and we went on with our drawing lesson, but by no means so merrily as usual.

Later on in the day, as I was sitting alone in a warm corner, carving a head with my pocket knife out of a piece of box wood that I had picked up, and musing over absent friends, Coroni walked across the plateau and sat down beside me. I went on with my work without speaking. As usual, he was smoking a cigarette: Luigi made them for him by the score at a time. I stole a glance at his face.

It was a face clouded with trouble. His eyes were heavy and sunken, as though he had been watching all night, or perhaps for several nights, and the bones of his cheeks stood out more prominently than I had ever noticed them do before.

"Your captivity does not seem to trouble you much, Signor," he said, after he had sat watching me full five minutes.

"Where's the use of fuming about what can't be helped?" I said. "I am here, I cannot get away, and I must make the best of my position. But you are not looking well, Signor Coroni. You look troubled in your mind."

"You know my name!" he said, with a start. I bowed. "It matters not," he continued, with a shrug. "It is not worth while inquiring how you came to learn it." He knocked the ash off his cigarette. "Yes—I am in trouble, as you say. My wife—my poor Marietta—is ill, and the Holy Mother only knows whether she will ever recover." Tears stood in his eyes as he finished speaking.

"May I inquire what is amiss with her?"

"A fortnight ago the giandarmi were after us and we had to make a hurried march. The road was bad, and on the way my wife's foot slipped. She fell and broke her wrist. Margherita and I set it for her as well as we knew how. She seemed to get better for the first few days, but since then she has got worse and worse. Last night she knew neither Luigi nor me. She was a child again, at home with her father and mother in the cottage near the fountain. It was pitiful to hear her. This morning her mind has come back to her, but she burns—oh! how she burns."

"Have you no means of obtaining proper assistance for her?" I asked.

He shook his head. "There is an old doctor down in Vicarno—old and lame he is—but he would have come up gladly if I could have sent a mule and two of my men to fetch him. But those cursed troopers are guarding all the passes, and the good old doctor would never get through."

"As it happens, I know a little about medicines and surgery," I said. "If you have no objection to my seeing your wife, I might perhaps be able to suggest some means of alleviating her sufferings."

His face brightened in a moment. He flung away his cigarette and sprang to his feet. "If you could but do that!" he said, and he wrung my hand in a way that made my fingers tingle for several minutes. Then he beckoned me to follow him.

Turning sharply round one of the projecting shoulders of bare and serrated rock which shut in the plateau, I found myself opposite the entrance to a cavern of considerable size, of whose existence I had no previous knowledge. Across this entrance a screen of dried sheep skins was hung at night as a protection from the weather. But this was now removed to let in the daylight, while in one of the farther recesses an oil lamp was burning brightly. A few of the commonest domestic articles in use in the cottage of an Italian peasant were scattered about. In one corner an old woman was heating a pipkin over a handful of glowing embers. In another corner was a truckle bed, on which lay the woman I had come to see, but the corner was so dark that I could distinguish nothing clearly. The brigand chief stooped and kissed the face before him, and spoke a few reassuring words in the patois in which he generally addressed his men.

The first thing to be done was to have the bed removed into clearer daylight. This was quickly accomplished. I then saw before

me all that illness had spared of a remarkably lovely woman. The face of Marietta Coroni was of a type rare in sunny Italy. Surely some ancestor of hers must have made his way across the Alps from some more northern clime, and, finding a home among the warm vineyards, have settled there for life. For Marietta's skin was nearly as fair as that of any Swedish beauty; her eyes, too, were of a dark and lustrous blue, and her hair in colour a golden brown. And yet she was only the daughter of a poor innkeeper, and had never been more than thirty miles away from the place where she was born.

That she was very ill I saw at a glance, but not perhaps so dangerously ill as her husband believed her to be. On taking the bandages off her wrist, which she allowed me to do without a murmur, I found that the fracture had been improperly set, and that the operation would have to be gone through again. The arm was swollen and inflamed nearly up to the shoulder, in addition to which the patient was suffering from a species of low fever, more tedious than dangerous had she had proper medical attendance, but sufficiently alarming in an out-of-the-way spot like the brigand's hiding-place.

Coroni's anxious eyes watched every expression of my face. When I had completed my examination I took him aside.

"Your wife is certainly very ill," I said, "but there is no immediate danger. Only you must send some one at once to the nearest town for certain medicines and liniments which I shall need."

With true Italian impulsiveness Coroni seized my hand and carried it to his lips. "How happy your words make me, Signor," he cried. "Pinelli is Marietta's cousin. He will risk anything for her sake. He knows every footpath through the hills, and he shall go and fetch all that you require."

"The fracture has been improperly set," I said. "The first thing to be done is to reduce the inflammation. When we have succeeded in that the bone will have to be reset. The operation will be a painful one."

"My Marietta is no coward," said Coroni, proudly. "She is not afraid of pain. Whatever you say must be done shall be done."

"Then let Pinelli be ready in ten minutes, and I will write down what I require."

In a quarter of an hour Pinelli stood before me, but so disguised that, till he spoke, I did not recognise him. The list of what I wanted, written out clearly in my best medical Latin, was received by him with a degree of reverence that was almost ludicrous, and hidden away in some mysterious pocket. "If I am not back by midday to-morrow, you will know that Andrea Pinelli is dead," he said. Then he tightened his belt and saluted his captain and myself. Three minutes later he waved us a last farewell before plunging into a narrow gorge that led downward in the direction of the nearest town.

Old Margherita was horrified when I insisted on applying cold

water bandages to the fractured arm. Cold water used in any way was an abomination in her eyes. But after sitting by my patient's bedside for four hours, and renewing the bandages myself as often as necessary, I had the satisfaction of finding the inflammation considerably reduced and the general temperature of the body lowered by several degrees. With the simple appliances at my command I contrived to manufacture one or two cooling drinks, which the sick woman drank gratefully. More than this could not be done till Pinelli should return with the medicines and other things for which he had been sent.

I was glad to see that Coroni had implicit faith in me. No doubt he rated my abilities too highly, but that was an error on the right side, so far as I was concerned. Several times during the day and the night which followed it, a great part of which I spent by my patient's bedside, Luigi brought me wine and cigarettes, and my table was spread in a way that was gratifying to a man who had lived upon little but black bread and vegetable soup for several days.

Pinelli got safely back to the encampment about ten next morning, covered with dust and utterly worn out with fatigue, but bringing with him all that I had sent him for. One of the articles I had ordered was chloroform. I knew that the resetting of the wrist would be an operation the pain of which it was desirable to save my patient, if it were possible to do so. I explained my intention to Coroni. He had some vague idea as to the wonderful properties of chloroform, but knew nothing of it except by hearsay. "Whatever you say must be done shall be done," he said, as he had said before. "Everything is in your hands."

The chloroform was administered, and the broken bone reset without the patient being aware of what had happened. A little later she sank into a sleep which lasted for eight hours. Next morning she was wonderfully better. "In three days your wife will be able to leave her bed, and in a month from now she will be nearly as well as ever she was," I said to Coroni.

"Oh, Signor!" was all that he could say, as, for the second time, he carried my hand to his lips.

Among the personal belongings of which I had been despoiled by the brigands was a miniature likeness of a child, a young girl, on which I set a very special value. After Pinelli had given me back my piccolo and sketch-book I had asked him to restore the miniature also. But the fellow had merely grinned and went through the pantomime of kissing something and pressing it to his heart. After that I had said nothing more about the likeness.

An hour after I had said to Coroni, "Your wife will be as well as ever in a month," Luigi came running to me. In his hand he carried my precious likeness. "Papa has sent you this," he said. "He is so happy, now that mamma is better!"

From that time forward every day showed a marked improvement

in Marietta's condition. Coroni was effusive in his expressions of gratitude. The rest of my property, including my watch and purse, that had been taken from me the night that I was captured, was restored to me. Not a syllable was now said about my ransom money. I was treated as an honoured guest.

By this time the allotted fortnight had nearly expired, but without bringing any tidings from home. I began to wonder what the end of my strange adventure was to be. Coroni and I were now good friends. We smoked cigarettes and played cards by the hour together. In fact, there was nothing else to do. The brigand chief improved considerably on further acquaintance. He told me much, from time to time, about his early career, but he never revealed the particular reasons which had induced him to leave his home and kindred and take up with his present lawless and desperate mode of life. But Luigi was my chief companion, and the piccolo lessons now went on more merrily than ever.

Marietta could now leave the cavern and sit daily for an hour or two in the sun. She thanked me with her beautiful eyes more than with her tongue, for she was a woman of few words. All that her husband asked at such times was to lie at her feet and bask in the happiness of knowing that she was given back to him again. At length the day came when I said to Marietta, "After to-morrow you will need me no more. After to-morrow there will be no more nasty medicine for you to take." She laughed with the glee of a child at the thought of no more physic. It would be requisite for her wrist to remain some time longer in splints, but what little attention she now required could be rendered by Coroni equally as well as by myself.

Early on the morning of the thirteenth day of my captivity Luigi brought me a letter which one of the band had brought in during the night. It was from my father, telling me where the money for my ransom was lodged, and begging me to get out of my scrape as quickly as possible and return home, as my mother's health was far from strong. As soon as I saw Coroni, I told him the contents of the letter. "I will give you an order to obtain the money," I said, "which you can send by one of your men. When he has placed the gold in your hands you will have no further occasion to detain me. I am anxious to get back to England as quickly as possible."

"Stay with us, Signor, for this last day," said Coroni, earnestly. "You shall start to-morrow morning before daybreak, and I will myself escort you part of the way. But if you think that I or my men are going to touch a single lire of the ransom money, you don't know the heart of Antonio Coroni. You have given me back my Marietta, and I owe you a debt of gratitude that can never be paid."

He spoke with an emotion the sincerity of which could not be doubted. It was apparent that I was about to get out of my scrape much more easily than I had ventured to hope.

In the evening we assembled for our last meal together. Marietta's eyes were sad. Coroni was grave aud taciturn, while Luigi made no secret of his grief at my approaching departure. He clung tightly round my neck when the moment came to say good-night, and kissed me many times. "When you grow to be a man, Luigi, and go to England," I said, "you must not forget to call and see me." With that I tore a leaf out of my pocket-book and wrote my home address upon it. Then I gave him a gold pencil case as a last memento. The piccolo and a number of my drawings I had already given him.

He was going away in tears when his father called him back. Placing a hand gently on the boy's curls, Coroni said: "Luigi, as long as ever thou livest thou wilt never forget that this gentleman saved thy mother's life. Should it ever be in thy power to do him any service, great or small, at whatever cost to thyself, thou wilt not fail to do it." The boy nodded his head seriously, as one who fully comprehended what was said to him. "I will never forget as long as I live," he said.

Next morning, while the stars were still shining, Coroni and I and two of the band began to descend the mountains. The brigand chief walked by my side for a couple of hours. At length the time came for him to say farewell. The rest of my journey was to be done in company of the two men. I held out my hand. Coroni grasped it in both his. "One last word," I said. "That boy of yours ——"

"I know what you would say, Signor. He shall never become what his father is. I swear it. Rather would I see him lying cold in his grave."

Those were Coroni's last words to me. A minute later and he was gone. Before parting from the two men, who accompanied me as far on my road as it was safe for them to venture, I said to one of them, as I slipped certain coins into his hand: "With regard to the two travellers who were shot and buried up yonder among the hills," and I nodded my head in the direction whence we had just come, "were they Inglesi—countrymen of mine—or where did they come from, and what were their names?"

The fellow's face broadened into one huge grin.

"They were no travellers, Signor," he said. "What you saw were the graves of two of our men who were wounded by the giandarmi and afterwards died."

I turned away in a huff. Signor Coroni had taken a "rise" out of me: there could be no doubt about that.

A fortnight afterwards I found myself at Larch Cottage, and my adventure with the brigands seemed little more than a dream. I did not expect to hear more of Coroni, or ever to see Luigi again.

On that point, however, I was destined to be mistaken.

(*To be concluded.*)

EDWIN AND ANGELINA.

A TRUE STORY.

I.

CONSIDERING that he really loved her, he *had* perhaps been rather long in making up his mind: but then, it must be allowed he had an unusual number of temptations to remain single. His home was a very comfortable one. He was idolized by his mother, looked up to and made much of by his brothers and sisters, had his own suite of rooms, and everything about him so perfect, what wonder that he was in no great hurry? Though he had always meant to marry some time, of course; to have a nice home of his own; and he had always meant to marry the one the world held most dear to him; the girl who had been his baby-companion and youthful sweetheart.

Though no word of love had been spoken between them since he used to walk home from school with her, when she was but fifteen and he barely twenty, they had not ceased to regard each other with tender feelings; yet for the last five years he might have married any time, so to speak, having been sufficiently "well off." He had somehow not done so. There had always seemed plenty of time. *She* was always the same to him. He had, almost unconsciously, half feared that if he married he might find himself, comparatively speaking, in poor circumstances. He had, involuntarily, pictured himself as unable to dress so carefully and modishly as now; as having to deny himself good wines, good cigars, cabs, and various other things—small, perhaps, in themselves, but mounting up in the year. Now, however, there was no necessity to go into such trifles; he had saved largely during the last few years, and at thirty-five years of age had determined to marry at once. It was not a worthless offer he would have to make his Angelina. So far as he was concerned, he might without vanity consider himself good-looking, and a favourite with society; more deservedly so, perhaps, than half the men of his acquaintance; for besides a pleasing manner, he had a fine tenor voice, and sang well; and last, though far from least, he was a fast-rising literary man; had long since been recognised as a writer of no mean merit, and was making his way accordingly. In literary circles, by a certain class, he was welcomed with delight, and by all with respect and a certain amount of admiration.

Reflections more or less like this ran through his mind on this his thirty-fifth birthday, as he rolled luxuriously home from chambers, in a hansom, smoking a choice cigar. And having taken this not altogether unsatisfactory inventory of himself, his thoughts turned to her, his darling. There was no one like her in the world. She had not, per-

haps, a handsome face, but surely it was beautiful, so pure and lofty, with its sweet grey eyes. Then her dear little white hands, always so busy—how many thousand times he had pictured them at work by *his* fireside, how many thousand times he had pictured those soft eyes brightening up at his return at night! None but himself knew how near he had been, many a time and oft, doing the deed. Sometimes when spending evenings with "the girls" at his mother's house, she would look so bewitching in her plain dress, generally black silk, with lace collar and cuffs, that he could not help noticing how different she was from other women, and a sudden longing would come to make her his own. Sometimes when she sang little simple songs, in a voice, and with a manner, that would have almost drawn tears from a stone, the words had almost trembled on his lips: but upon the whole it had been better to wait until he had fame to offer her as well as love.

He would ask her to-morrow to share with him all he had made of a name, and he felt how happy he would be able to make her, and it would be a grateful change for *her*, poor girl. Her life had been a bit hard since her father's death, when she took to daily teaching to help to keep up their home. They were not poor, exactly. No; they had a very pretty, cozy little house, but there were a good many younger sisters and brothers growing up, and Angelina would not be a burden in any way upon her mother; she would rather add her mite to the general store, than take anything from it. Thus it came to pass that for the last five years she had taught daily, and the man who was now about to make her his wife loved and honoured her for it from the bottom of his heart. He dismissed his cab at the corner of the square. His mother had a soirée in honour of the birthday, and he would slip in unnoticed and have time to dress.

Just as the cab rolled off, a friendly hand was laid upon his shoulder and a friendly voice saluted him—that of an old Oxford chum. They had been very intimate at college, and the friendship had never been allowed quite to fall through. "So glad to see you, old boy! Just been to your place, and hearing you were out, was coming away disconsolate. I want you to come down to me in September. Now don't say no; you'll forget how to handle a gun, you know, if you go on like this. Two years since you honoured my preserves, and on your own showing you've honoured no one else's. Do come, there's a dear fellow; I've three or four of your set coming, and at least a dozen dying to be introduced to you, to say nothing of the ladies, several of whom are lion-hunters."

The answer came after a moment's pause, and, strange to say, with a blush like a girl.

"Well, Frank, I should really be delighted to accept your invitation, but I am afraid it—it would be impossible this year."

"You don't mean to say you're thinking of marrying? you have rather a guilty appearance."

Our friend Edwin (who was, we know, not only *thinking* of marry-

ing, but had arrived at the full determination of doing so without delay, and had actually chosen *that* month, in his heart, for his honeymoon) laughed a little, and owned the soft impeachment. "Yes, he was going to marry, but he hoped *that* need not part old friends like them."

"Oh! well, it was very bad hearing—an awful pity," &c., &c. "Almost as great a blow as if some one told me I was to be married immediately myself."

After some more light talk, the friends parted—Frank to the dinner at his club, where he informed some kindred spirits that "another good man had gone wrong," and Edwin to the home where his handsome face and graceful figure were welcomed gladly by other gentle hearts than those of his mother and sisters.

II.

On the evening following the events recorded in our last chapter our friend Edwin bent his steps towards the home of his lady-love. He was always welcome there: they all liked him, and at many a pleasant little musical evening his rich voice had played a conspicuous part. On this particular night, however, he does not care to see any of the others; he wants only his Angelina, to make fully known to her *all* his love, and to rest at last in the warm sunshine of that sweet smile which is for the future to illumine every day of all his life. Fortune seems to favour him. "Lina" and her mother are for once quite alone. The young people have gone to the theatre. Lina was a little overtired, and preferred to remain with her mother. The trio had not been talking many minutes before a servant called away the mistress, and *they were alone!*

She was knitting a stocking, and a little ball of cotton lay in her lap. He stooped forward from his chair beside her, and possessing himself of the little ball, began slowly unwinding and re-winding the cotton. He had not imagined the words would be so hard to speak, but now, with those clear eyes and that unconcerned expression before him, he found it difficult to begin. "Lina, I came here to-night to ask you to be my wife." Better not to beat about the bush; now it was *done*, and he sat up straight and looked at her. "Will you marry me?"

A faint blush spread over the pale cheek, and a slight start accompanied it, that sent the little ball upon its travels. After stooping for a moment to recover it, she turned upon him a face white as if the moon shone upon it. "No! I cannot marry you." Then rising, she continued very quietly, but with a tremulous voice: "I am very sorry, but I cannot marry you." And would have left the room.

At first he had seemed stunned; but when he saw her going he sprang up and intercepted the movement.

"Lina, you cannot leave me like this. At least, explain your conduct."

Then she stood passively before him, very pale, and, as he now saw for the first time, very worn and sorrowful looking.

"I have nothing more to say. I can only repeat that I can never marry you."

"Why not? do you not care for me?"

Then came the answer that froze the very blood in his veins, it was spoken so calmly and sadly. "No, Edwin, *not now*. But," she added, with a deep sigh, "if I must speak, I had better tell you the truth."

Here she looked at him with a faint smile, and clasped her hands tightly together. "If you had loved me enough to make me your wife before you became rich, we might have been happy. God knows, I loved you *then*. But the years that have followed have altered me so that sometimes I scarcely recognise myself. I have grown old in heart, and no longer desire to form any ties beyond those I have already. I loved you once very dearly, but through all these years it has been dying, and it is long now since I told myself that, though we might always be friends, my love was dead."

"No, not dead. Oh! my darling, I never dreamed of this, or that your life was really hard, as your words imply. Forgive me, Lina, and don't look at me with that still look. My own, my only love, I shall go mad if you cast me off."

"Hush! there is some one coming. Good-bye, you will soon forget this. I have learned to forget. I am sorry you have spoken now; the hope that you ever would died long before the love of which it was born. You will find some woman younger and fairer than I, who am no longer young; she, perhaps, will love you now as I *once* did. Good-bye."

She held out to him her little cold white hand; he mechanically took it, dropped it, and she was gone.

When Mamma returned from her visit to the kitchen she found poor Edwin "all abroad." At first, being short-sighted, she noticed nothing, but after some vague conversation he rose and, complaining of not feeling quite "up to the mark," took his leave. Mamma afterwards described his appearance as being that of one walking in his sleep.

She had refused him! His first feeling was one of surprise; intense, blank surprise. He had so often pictured this meeting, but so differently, that, now it was over, the aching surprise seemed more than he could bear. Next came sorrow, then anger; then he thought of all she had said, which came evidently from her heart of hearts. He felt how selfish his conduct had been; why had he not been by her side all those years and shielded her from this hard life? She had called herself no longer young, and he had noticed lines in that brow which had used to be so smooth and fair. In his despair he groaned aloud. His love for her was greater than ever; he could not bear this punishment. No! he would write to

her and beg forgiveness: she used to be so loving years ago: he would write a letter that no woman could withstand. And with this grain of comfort in his ocean of trouble, he went home thoroughly tired out by the long walk he had taken.

The best part of the next day he spent in composing the letter that was to do so much, and before it was finally folded and placed in its envelope the floor of his chamber looked as if a snow storm had passed over it. The letter contained deep contrition for having allowed her to work as she had done, and many sincere regrets that he had not asked her, when they were both younger, to share life with him, but (and then came the part about which, unconsciously to himself, blinded as he was with self, there was a false ring) he "had waited till he had a *name*, such as it was, as well as a *home* to offer her," &c.

The five years which by him had been spent in comfort and affluence had been spent by her in hard, uncongenial work, and her heart had died within her; all girlish ideas of love and marriage had flown for ever: this last he saw, but he quite forgot the cause. However, there was still a faint ray of hope, and with the first feeling of comfort he had experienced for two long days, he turned his back upon the post-office into which he had dropped the all-important letter.

III.

As soon as it would have been possible for him to receive an answer, supposing she wrote immediately, he watched eagerly for the postman, and that was the following day at breakfast time. He was not exactly disappointed at not getting one *then;* of course her answer would take a little time and thought; probably she would write during the day, and he would get it at night. On his return in the evening he did feel a pang when he found nothing awaiting him. Hope, however, again "told a flattering tale;" he must not be impatient: a dozen trivial things might have taken up her time, for hers were hands that always found work to do. Doubtless her answer would reach him on the following day. But alas! the next day brought the same result, and the next, and the next, and he had just begun to admit to himself that the letter was a failure, when another ray of hope unexpectedly lightened his dark prospects.

He gained from a conversation he overheard between his mother and sisters that Angelina had left her home to nurse a sick aunt in the country; a maiden aunt, who lived alone. She had gone the day after that on which he had made her the offer, and had not received his letter, therefore, *before* she went. Dying hope now sprung up almost as strong as ever. Perhaps the letter had never been forwarded, or not until now; perhaps it had been mislaid; perhaps the aunt had been so ill that Angelina could not even find time to write him a line. He resolutely turned a deaf ear to the voice of his

heart, which began, "*Love* would have found time." Perhaps fifty things; but oh! heart, close thy doors against the cold, dreadful feeling of despair, the certainty that his appeal was vain. So the next week stole away, and the next, and the next, and his sorrow, now a month old, was growing heavier every day.

One morning, just as the fifth week had commenced, he found on his study table a little modest-looking note in *her* pretty, careful hand. She began by apologising for the delay which was caused by the letter having been mislaid, and only now forwarded to her, and she then thanked him for the honour he had done her; but she really meant what she had said: and though she regretted it, she could *never* marry him. They were unsuited to each other—and so forth.

He felt for the moment, as he pressed his hands to his head, as if his mind were leaving him. This calmness of hers was so crushing. But he had one *last* card to play; he would see her once more, and all that mortal man could do to make her change this terrible decree *he* would do, and with a flushed cheek and an unnatural light in his eye, he hurried from the house.

On the following day, a lovely day in the beginning of August, he arrived at N——, a pretty little Hampshire village, and after making a few enquiries, found the house. A little cottage villa on the outskirts of the village. As he walked up the shady road leading to the house, hat in hand, enjoying the refreshing breeze, for the heat of the day was over, his quick eyes perceived the two ladies in the garden. The old lady, now convalescent, was seated in a low American chair on the lawn. It was five o'clock, and they were taking tea, which was spread on the grass. Angelina sat at her aunt's feet. It was a long time since he had seen her with this "sans souci" air—it reminded him of ten years ago. She wore a thin, white dress, and a long waving lock of her brown hair had escaped from the neat "coiffe" in which she always wore it. Years seemed to have been lifted from her shoulders since he last saw her, but the pretty apple-blossom in her cheeks, which improved her so wonderfully, quickly faded when she recognized their visitor.

After first greetings, he muttered something about being in the neighbourhood, and thinking he might be allowed the privilege of calling. He then devoted himself to the aunt, who straightway fell in love with him, and thinking with wonderful acuteness that he had come to see Lina, determined that he should have an opportunity of doing so. She therefore presently requested Angelina to take him into the house and give him some tea: she would prefer remaining out a little longer, if they would kindly excuse her. The opportunity had come, but it was of no use; he begged, he entreated, to no avail. She "no longer loved him," and *nothing* could induce her to marry him now.

Half in madness, half in anger, and all in love, he asked her did she mean to remain as she was, with no one to love her when

she grew old, and perhaps had to work until she could do so no longer?

She smiled a saddish little smile, and said, "Most likely it would be so, but that would be better than marrying anyone you did not love, and who only married you from a feeling of pity; and now she never wished to hear anything more about marrying. It was like her youth—to her a thing of the past."

He gazed at her for a moment—the brown hair parted evenly over the white brow, the soft, steady grey eyes, the sweet, sad mouth—and afraid to trust himself a moment longer, he seized his hat and rushed like a madman from the house. Indeed, he was just then little better than mad. Now his hope was *really* dead; at last he knew it.

For a long time people wondered much what was the matter with Edwin. Some—the sentimental, mostly ladies—guessed pretty near the truth; others—the practical, mostly his bosom friends—thought bad investments, or dyspepsia. The only one who ever really knew the exact state of the case was the friend of whom mention has been made before in these pages. They met in town, already deserted, the last week in August. His friend at once saw something had gone wrong, and after some light common-places he gave Edwin a comforting slap on the shoulder and an encouraging word or so. "Something wrong, old man? Don't be down-hearted; not much, I hope. Not got into the hands of the Jews, have you?"

"No, Frank, thanks; not that kind of trouble; that isn't my way, as you know. Something worse than even *that.* I shall lose the holiday on which, as I told you, I had set my heart. I am *not* going away next month."

"Not going to be married just yet, after all? Perhaps you will come, then, to ——" But something stopped him. "How selfish I am. You don't mean to say she wouldn't have you?"

"That's just it. Now don't say 'there are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught;' won't do here, Frank. I don't mind telling you—you're a good fellow, and won't talk about me to any of them; but I've loved her all my life, and it is an awful blow. Good-bye."

Ten years after, when Edwin was bald and grey, and Angelina's brown hair itself thickly streaked with silver, they met again. The first three of those ten years she had spent with her aunt. For the remaining seven she had been the wife of a hard-working country doctor. They met amongst the pictures at Burlington House. She was leading by the hand a bright-haired child of about six summers. And he was alone. Oh! so alone.

A MAD BALL.

By Narissa Rosavo.

AMID the whirl of a season's midnight dissipation a "mad ball" offers features sufficiently novel to interest those prone to study human nature in unusual phases. To such I would say, do not neglect any opportunity which may offer of witnessing for yourselves at least one lunatic entertainment of this sort; and, in the meantime, as there are no doubt many to whom entrée within the scenes of an asylum is an impossibility, it is probable that this slight sketch of how amusement is used as curative treatment in one of our great public establishments for the insane may not prove uninteresting.

The N. Asylum is a large one—a small territory in itself; the seat of government being the Resident Medical Superintendent's house, the central block in the great row of buildings. Thence we command a view of all the dependencies: farms, gardens, hospitals and chapel. The scene is seldom one of still life. If the better and more useful sort of patients are not at work within sight, the worse class, male or female, are perhaps taking exercise under escort; going by in gangs, shouting, singing, talking to themselves, picking up stones or grass, or loitering to pour out volumes of profane abuse of mankind in general, addressed to the empty air: but, strange feature and fate of lunacy, never associating in pairs. The mad make no friends, join in no confederacy of love or hate.

We have no lack of population within these wide and lofty walls. The patients' list sometimes rises to nearly 800, while the attendants number almost 100. As it is the interest of all here to cure and dismiss those now sick in mind, everything is conducted upon the most approved system of medical treatment, under which heading, kindness and diversion, varying occupation, where that is at all possible, form leading features. In the most desperate cases, padded cells replace the chains and straight waistcoats yet in vogue—in Spain, at any rate. And plenty of fresh air, good food, and firm treatment does frequently work wondrous cures. Many go away restored, with hearts swelling with gratitude to the doctor, who has, with God's help, succeeded in fully exorcising the demon within them. Others leave practically well, but so weakened by disease as to be loth to go. They return when they may, to hang about the walls and view the scenes of their sufferings. Some, still ill, escape, and return of their own accord, having tried the outer world and found it too hard for them. If the asylum discipline were harder still, as it so often is in private institutions of this sort, they would rather seek

the readiest refuge of the insane—a suicide's grave. So that their reappearance speaks well for their treatment.

It is good that such places as N. exist; and surely its ball-room makes now a prominent point in its attractions. It is large, lofty, and well-ventilated. Gay-coloured Japanese lanterns hang from the centre beams in the arched roof all down the room. Framed oleographs ornament the walls, which are stained a dark red brown to shoulder height, and above that painted in stencilling with graceful designs, the whole of this work having been done by a madman! The floor has been well waxed by half a dozen of the patients.

We have one of the first requisites for a good ball here, namely, an excellent band, led by a thorough musician, whose soul is in his work. The performers are some twenty or more of the male attendants. If "music hath charms to tame the savage breast," it surely also must have healing in it for the suffering souls of the insane. This large hall, lit up by a multitude of lamps, is just what the most ardent ball-goer could desire for a scene of action: but where are the merry faces, the elegant costumes, the gay voices of the dancers? Ah! where?

At one end of the room, under the orchestra, card-tables are spread, and some games are in progress. The insane can play whist, since cards were the recreation of mad Charles of France; but there is a sullen impassiveness, a weary indifference, or a sly cunning, or greedy look upon most of the faces we see around. There are notable and many exceptions, but this is the rule. Some two or three hundred men sit close together, in rows up the room, on benches. Opposite to them, on a slightly raised daïs, are a multitude of insane women. Some of these are very fantastically attired. Here is the Virgin Mary, for instance, as one poor lady calls herself, with a wonderful head-dress, half-hat, half-turban, and all jags and rags and indescribable points of colour.

Running down in lines, close against the wall on either side, sit the female attendants, remarkable by their neat costumes of black dresses and white muslin sleeves, fronts, and long aprons, finished by Dolly Varden caps of lace, with long lappets hanging behind. No one can mistake their identity, or mix them up with the patients, as happens in other asylums where individual likings are allowed in the matter of attire. This dress is a subject of envy with some of the female patients evidently. See, here is one pretty young woman wearing her hair in a fashionable knot at the nape of her neck; she has borrowed a white bib, but finishes, and spoils, her get up by wearing a red scarf across her shoulders, which drops off every moment as she dances.

The matron of the asylum sits at the end of her row ot subs., on our side of the room, near the private door by which we enter from the doctor's house. Our special bench has been appropriated by three patients of a better class than ordinary, men who disdain to

mingle with the common herd. Lord York, Prince Valerian, and General Walters are their titles, on their own showing.

The last named is in reality a mad tailor, and his bearing is military and his manners dignified. To-night he has borrowed a red jacket of a pensioner attendant, who has also good-naturedly lent his medals. These Walters firmly believes he has himself won during service at the Crimea. Under this happy persuasion he struts about with extra solemnity and pomp of manner. He is such part and parcel now of this asylum, which he has inhabited long and will never leave, that it would seem as though the institution must collapse in his absence. Talk to him for one moment, asking some brief common-place question requiring an immediate answer, and you will believe him as sane as yourself. Engage him for five minutes, and you will, if nervous, look around to see that protection is at hand, if needed. He will so mix up sense and unreason, fact and fancy, that the Sphinx herself would need an unraveller. With him whiskey is "native boldness," brandy "Grecian modesty." "It is the spirit which does everything. The body is nothing, a vain, empty, weak shell. Were it not that he wears a silver casing enclosing his chest, his lungs would be nowhere. By this simple precaution, however, he has already managed to live 170 years, and intends to make out as many more; by this, and by also taking now and again half a pound of arsenic with his meals."

These three men politely rise and draw aside when we appear, and Walters, who is a very elegant dancer, crosses the room to where the prettiest and youngest of the attendants sits, soliciting her for a partner in the Peterhof waltzes, the introduction to which the band already strikes up. Some pique or fun is on hand here, however, and Walters, who rarely asks in vain, is refused. He goes up the line with similar ill fortune. A titter follows him, but he carries his dignified grey head all the steadier, and at length a fat elderly partner rises at his summons, and dancing begins. Some thirty or forty couples are now on foot. Some of these are very odd to look upon indeed. None but Walters dares so high as to ask an attendant to dance with him, but sometimes a woman warder selects a female patient to be her partner.

More often the insane dance alone, or with each other, the doctor sometimes acting as master of the ceremonies, and introducing pairs. On one occasion I saw a little contretemps arise after dancing had begun, when an introduction had taken place. The swain was coveted as a partner by a second furious-looking beldame, who snatched his hands from off his legitimate companion, and would have him to dance with herself. The helpless and puzzled look of the youth—the girl danced on composedly alone—was very amusing and yet pitiful. His dilemma was observed, and the matter was set right presently, to his great relief. He went through the dance correctly, made a bow to his restored partner and retired.

There are manners amongst the insane as well as the sane. I have seen women of the worst class, here, rise instinctively on my approach, and remain standing so long as a lady was by, even while their unhappy lips uttered evil words.

Some of the dancing is of the very rudest description, hardly to be called such, but even when the feet merely shuffle about there is plainly pleasure to the owners in moving them thus. Here is a respectable man of the well-to-do artisan type; he has been working hard all day, but he never misses a dance. He never seeks a partner, but plods through the programme as steadily as a machine, keeping splendid time and step. He looks disappointed, now, when the doctor interferes, and says he will be done up next day, and must not. He sits down for a brief space, and then rises again to go on like a teetotum once more.

Here are two insane women with whom it is also necessary to interfere. Quite regardless of time, tune, or step, they hold hands and whirl round and round. These are stopped imperatively, and set going in the contrary direction for a change. Our eyes scarcely quit this group when another attraction offers itself.

A small man comes up the room in bounds. He leaps several feet into the air at each step. He is perhaps the oddest figure here. Wild shaggy hair flies in all directions. He wears white pantaloons, white boots, a coloured coat, red bone fuchsias in his ears, large blue goggles on his eyes, and above all a dare-devil look. Every now and again he snaps his fingers in the air with astonishing vigour, as though he meant something by the action. He is nearly as great an institution in the ball-room as Walters.

Next let us observe an innocent looking youth, whom we will call Quasimodo. He has bright blue eyes, with a laugh in them as often as on his lips, and he meets your glance intelligently, but he has a crooked shoulder and a very lame leg. It has been broken at the knee, ill set, and comes out in a bow, but he is not to be defrauded of his dance by these infirmities: he rests upon the lame member and whirls the other about vigorously. No doubt this process is a little wearisome, and he presently regains his seat. This happens to be on the front bench, and next to a very important personage, none less than the Pope.

This gentleman is elderly and portly, and wears a watch—a fact signified by the display of two long brass chains, one a recent gift from off a christmas-tree, got up for the patients' amusement. His Holiness will feel highly gratified by our asking to see the watch (which is a toy one, suited for a child), but as this precious treasure is wrapped up in various covers and enclosed finally within a box, the process of unfolding takes time. The Pope wears gloves too. He has heard that it is the correct thing to do at a ball. How he contrives to get and keep them is a mystery, as is also the origin of a tall silk hat, a regular go-to-meeting article, which is not without its

uses even here. A very mad young farmer, with wild eyes, coal black hair, and a passion for posturing, will never dance without he has this on his head. He comes and borrows it every evening, and is now in the act of doing so.

The Pope gravely draws forth the coveted article from under the bench at his feet, and hands it to him, whom we will call Corydon, viewing him a little anxiously, as the latter bangs it recklessly on his head without so much as a "thank you." The Pope never refuses to make this loan, whatever fears for the safety of his property may harass his breast. Corydon steers his way swiftly through the dancers, with a purpose, right to the other end of the room. He has set his mind upon dancing with an elderly lady in a large white-frilled cap. She is here almost for the first time, and keeps now with the attendants on their special bench. Although a pauper patient, she is perhaps the best born woman in the room. Her father, in his day, danced in a minuet at the Tuileries, at the side of Marie Antoinette, when she was at the zenith of her glory. He cut as fine a figure there as he did everywhere else, until his ancestral acres had all been squandered.

This poor lady does not appreciate the honour Corydon designs her for. She resists; he insists. Finally, drawn up by his powerful hand, she makes a few steps, but her sense of unfitness for the scene she is made to enact causes her evident uneasiness, and an attendant rescues her. Corydon sulkily retraces his steps, and gives back the hat to the Pope.

Meantime his Holiness has not been idle. He keeps a large white and blue check kerchief spread out upon his knees. This is his praying carpet. Every now and then—notably at each change in the music—he rises, lays the cloth on the ground, faces right round, and drops upon his knees for just so long, exactly, as it takes him to get there; then up again. This tableau is rehearsed perhaps thirty times in the course of each evening. It has just been gone through now, to the great amusement of the lame boy at his side. While the Pope resumes his seat, and heaves a sigh of satisfaction over a duty performed, Quasimodo turns a merry glance upon us visitors, which says as plainly as looks can speak, "Did you ever see such a fool?" "Never!" we telegraph back with our eyes, and Quasimodo nods content.

"Surely that boy is not mad?" one of our party says to our host, the doctor.

The latter looks and laughs. "You think not?"

"I am ready to wager anything he is as sane as yourself," is the too positive reply.

"Very well. But you will lose your wager."

The Peterhof waltzes are things of the past. Quasimodo is asked if he can give the company a song. Excess of delight at once brings an idiotic leer into his face. He hobbles into the centre of the

room, and commences to croon unintelligible words to a sort of monotonous chant. He is improvising the whole, and pauses only to say this is Italian, and to offer an encore if desired. Corydon is very wild to-night, and having been motioned back to his seat about twelve times, eludes notice the thirteenth time, borrows the Pope's hat again, and comes up to Quasimodo offering a fair fight in the shape of a duet. The challenge is accepted. Each postures to the other and sings alternate strophes of nonsense and timeless intervals. Then both howl together in discord, as dogs cry at the moon. Corydon gets too excited, and is taken aside by a warder, upon which Quasimodo concludes by beginning to sing "When other Lips." This merges into "Go where Glory waits Thee," and then, into something else, words and airs being alike tangled into inextricable confusion until he is finally dismissed, the joke getting wearisome.

None have enjoyed this display of folly more than the patients. A madman is never so mad to the sane as he is to his fellows. Lord York has chuckled with contemptuous delight as he watched and listened. "A pair of idiots! But they know no better," he observed sagely, and then he approaches our party and asks one of us to dance the quadrille now forming with him. He is refused, timidly but decidedly. He persists. The assistant doctor comes forward with a warning glance at this poor man, who was a gentleman, and has been well educated. Lord York scowls fiercely at this interference. He escaped once, and was brought back from the railway station by this doctor, whom he has hated ever since with the rage and malice of a murderer. No words can tell his wrath now. "I appeal to you, sir, to protect the British subject, and to get me out of this place," he says to an officer making one of our party. The latter takes out a note-book to humour him. "Let me have your name and grievances!" he says promptly. But Lord York has again applied for a partner. Meantime a warder has been summoned. Almost before the latter touches his lordship on the arm the poor fellow walks off like a sheep. Prince Valerian has kept his eye on our party too. He now draws near. He is a man gifted with much artistic talent, but is very mad indeed.

"Doctor, I should like to get married," he says, deferentially, but with a quiet air of decision.

"Would you? Well, come to me to-morrow about it. I will talk the business over with you then."

"Why not now? I'd like one of those ladies for my wife. The Lady Mary would make a sweet princess!"

He is dismissed after this discriminating choice, for Lady Mary, as he calls her, is the belle of our party. The insane are as alive to superior beauty as their happier brethren.

The quadrille comes to an end, and the bandsmen disappear for refreshments. One of their number, however, remains, a piccolo player, who begins a series of reels and jigs. This is peculiarly the

saturnalia of the patients. A multitude of them rise up at once, and prance and pound about the room. Not even the Pope can resist "The Wind that blew the Barley." At the first notes he stands up and gravely shuffles his feet about for a brief space, and then returns to his frequent prayers and meditations. He eyes Corydon anxiously now. The precious hat has again been borrowed, and slants perilously on the wild wearer's head.

Corydon now dances up to our party. He has something folded in a small piece of newspaper in his hand. He pauses, and offers it to one of us. It is accepted. He then holds out his hand. This salutation is very popular with the patients, and is seldom refused. The lady gives her hand. It is held so close and so persistently that the host has to suggest a diversion, and poor Corydon moves off. He has given this new object of his regard the best and dearest thing he had to offer, namely a piece of tobacco. The offering is after all more than he is equal to. The self-sacrifice is too great. He is at our side presently once more, and, in dumb show, with extended supplicating palm, entreats the restoration of what he had given. The lady returns the little packet with a smile. On her side she is only too glad to be well rid of the odorous herb.

By this time the room's vaunted ventilation seems insufficient, and the services of one of Rimmel's vapourisers, distilling eau de cologne in our vicinity, is only too grateful. But happily the dancing stops now, for the bandsmen return and begin to play an exquisite selection of operatic airs. Perfect order and silence reign throughout this performance, which lasts about half an hour; and, on its conclusion, many of the patients clap to show their approval. For ourselves, we have now had enough of the scene and atmosphere, and we retire. The patients will soon be following our example. The ball ends at half-past nine. Then comes bed. Supper precedes the entertainment, which takes place, usually, at the N. Asylum, four nights in each week.

THE PHANTOM HARE.

"BESSY, did you ever see a white hare?"

"A white hare! No, never. Why do you ask it?"

Susan Stanhope did not say why she asked it. She seemed to have come home in a kind of excitement. I saw her fly up the broad garden path between the beds, crowded with sweet and homely flowers, as though she were in a hurry to escape from some danger. Her light footfall ran up the stairs to our bedroom, where I sat sewing, and she burst in upon me with the above question.

"Do not you Cornish people attach some superstition to the appearance of a white hare, Bessy?" she continued. "I think I once heard mamma say so."

"Well, I fancy we do, now you speak of it. But I don't know what the superstition is."

Susan folded the mantle she had taken off, put her bonnet up, and sat down in a chair on the opposite side of the open window. I had drawn my little work-table as close to the window as possible, being anxious to finish mending Janey's frock, which she had torn at the brook stile; and the twilight was already upon us. In September—we were in the earlier days of it—the evenings draw in quickly.

We lived at the Mount Farm, a large estate belonging to the Bertrams, situated near Penryn, in Cornwall. My father, Roger Trenathy, had been born in the parish; his people had rented it for several generations. He was what is called a substantial man, and was superior in cultivation to some farmers; but he lived in a homely style, and we, his children, had to work, as (*he* said) all farmer's daughters ought. Roger was his only son, already as busy on the land as he was. I was the eldest of all; Eunice was next to Roger, and seventeen this summer; little Jane was ten only, and went, day-boarder, to Mrs. Pollock's school. A great deal lay upon me, both of work and care. Our two maids were light-headed things, and Eunice was lighter-headed than they were.

Our mother was dead. She had been a clergyman's daughter, and was a true gentlewoman. It was to her training and companionship that I owed all the culture I possessed. Roger was like her: he had her pleasant eyes and her sweet smile. Her only sister had married a clergyman—the Reverend Philip Stanhope. He and his wife had both died, leaving one child, Susan—this same Susan now visiting us. Susan had had a first-rate education, but she had not much fortune: just one thousand pounds in the Three per Cents. When she left school, some eighteen months ago, my father had said she must make her home with us: but she preferred to be independent, and went out as a governess. Moreover, she wrote us word,

in a cordial but half-jesting manner, that she should not care to live always in a farm-house. This was the first holiday she had had—seven weeks long it was to be—and she had come to spend it with us, arriving two days ago.

"You found your way readily to Dame Mellon's, Susan?" I asked her, as I stitched away. For she and I were both to have gone to the widow Mellon's cottage after tea, to take the old woman some wool for knitting. For years she had knitted my father's winter stockings—as she did those of many other people around. It was the only work she could do, being blind, and we all liked to employ her. And, by the way, though I have called her *old*, she was not yet fifty. Care and illness had served to wrinkle her brow and to bend her back: and we young people are apt to think everybody else old if they have left forty years behind them. But Janey came home with this dreadful rent in her new frock—and the rent went more ways than one. I was angry with her, and had to mend it; and Susan said she would take the wool. So I let her take it, adding a little basket of things from our plentiful larder, and directing her which way to go.

"Oh yes! I found it quite well," answered Susan. "It is a picturesque little cottage, resting in that shady dell."

"What made you ask me about a white hare, Susan?"

"Because I have just seen one. I have had an adventure, Bessy."

"Indeed! What was it?"

"You were talking yesterday about Miss Bertram," she said, after a pause, never answering my question—"that she was to marry Mr. Arlegh. It was just, you know, as she passed the gate yonder in her pony carriage, drawing an old lady."

"Her aunt. Well?"

"*Is* she to marry Mr. Arlegh?"

"Why, of course she is. They are to be married in November. He is her cousin. Not a first cousin; a second or third. When her father, Sir William, died, thirteen months ago now, the title lapsed, but the Hall and all the large estates were left to Miss Bertram. Upon that, Hubert Arlegh (as is said) hastened to make her an offer, and after a time, but not at first, she accepted him."

Susan lifted her blue eyes quickly. "His name is Hubert, is it? What sort of a looking man is he?"

"A very handsome one."

"Tall and dark?"

"Tall, and rather dark. He is very good-looking indeed."

"Then I don't think him so, Bessy," she returned, in a contradictory, positive tone. "He may be what many people call handsome, as to features and colouring, but he has a most disagreeable expression; and——"

"Why Susan!" I interrupted, "What has taken you? Has Mr. Arlegh offended you?"

"Offended *me!* Oh dear, no."

"You spoke like it. Where have you seen him?"

"I will tell you, Bessy. I said I had had an adventure. In coming from Dame Mellon's cottage, through that dark, shady lane that leads from it—I don't know its name——"

"The park lane," I interrupted. "It belongs to Miss Bertram's park, but we have the liberty of passing through it."

"Well, I was coming quickly along, for it seemed to be getting quite dusk there under the trees, swinging the little straw basket in my hand, and doing it so carelessly that it swung off and went ever so many yards beyond me, just as a lady and gentleman turned the corner. I knew her for Miss Bertram—and a nice face I must say she has, and a charming manner. He stooped to pick up the basket, and she said a few pleasant words to me—something to the effect that she could see I had been to Mrs. Mellon's cottage, no doubt to take her some good cheer. I did not quite catch them; they were over in a moment, and Mr. Arlegh—for I am sure by your description it was he——"

"Yes, yes; no one would be walking with Miss Rose but he: and, for the matter of that, he is the only visitor staying at the Hall. Go on, Susan."

"At the very moment that he was holding out the basket to me, a beautiful white hare suddenly sprang out of the edge, bounded directly over his feet, and was lost in the opposite bushes. At least, I don't know where else it could have sprung from," broke off Susan, thoughtfully. "It seemed to startle him so much that he dropped the basket, and leaped back with a smothered cry. Miss Bertram did not appear to have seen it; she turned her head, and asked what was the matter. 'Oh, nothing,' he answered lightly, save that he had been careless enough to drop the young lady's basket: but I saw that his face had turned of a ghastly whiteness. As I stooped for the basket, for I was quicker than he, the same white hare reappeared from the bushes, crossed the lane as before, passing over his feet, and was lost to sight in the hedge. Bessy, he shuddered from head to foot like a man in dreadful fear: it is as true as that I am telling it to you."

"Fear of what?"

"How should I know? Miss Bertram looked about her as though some unseen danger were near, turning her head from side to side. Such was the idea that struck me; but still I do not think she saw the hare. They walked on, wishing me good evening, and I came running all the way home."

"It must have been a white rabbit, Susan."

"I assure you it was a hare: I could not mistake it. The question is—Why should it have frightened Mr. Arlegh?"

"Another question is," I said, passing over that, for in truth I saw no solution to it, and thought Susan must be fanciful—"Why

this should have made you take a prejudice against Mr. Arlegh?"

"It did not make me. It had nothing to do with it. One reason why I do not like him is, that he ——"

"That he what, Susan?"

"Well I hardly know how to express it. But he looked at me in so free and ugly a manner. As if really, Bessy, it was just as if I were a 'lass o'lightness.'"

I was silent. One or two disagreeable stories had gone about to Mr. Arlegh's discredit, and people wondered whether they had been quite kept from Miss Bertram. Possibly so; for they were not connected with our immediate neighbourhood, but with his own. He lived near St. Huth, a village seven miles off, upon the small property that had been his father's. Rose Bertram's riches, apart from her own sweet self, must have presented a temptation to him. He passed his time chiefly in London before being engaged to Miss Bertram, and made debts there.

"You give that as one reason for taking a dislike to him, Susan, though possibly you were mistaken. What is the other?"

"The other is a private reason of my own, Bessy. I cannot tell it."

She sat on at the window in deep thought, her blue eyes strangely serious as they gazed outwardly on the gathering gloom, her right hand pushing back unconsciously her fine golden hair. At length, just as it got too dark to see, I made a finish of my work, and we went down to the parlour. Eunice was helping Patience to lay the cloth for supper; father and Roger were coming in for it. Janey had been in bed long ago.

The last thing we did at night was to sing the evening hymn, I or Eunice playing it. Susan offered to play to-night. She was a skilful musician, as compared with us, and her soft touch was of itself melody.

It was Susan's custom to read the psalms for the evening to herself after we got into my bedroom, which she shared with me. On this evening she sat down as usual, but almost immediately closed the prayer-book.

"No, I *cannot* read to-night; it is of no use," she cried, almost passionately. "My wandering thoughts will not let me."

I turned round from the glass, unpinning my collar, and looked at her. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes wore a troubled light.

"Bessy, will you let me tell you a tale?"

"Certainly I will, dear?"

"Then let us put out the light and sit at the window."

She clapped the extinguisher on the candle herself, and we sat down at the window—closed now. It was a fine night; the moonlight flooding hill and dale, the bare corn-fields, the pasture lands, and the houses, large and small, scattered among them.

"You know, Bessy, that when mamma died, I was placed at school at Walborough for two years, to complete my education. It was a notedly good school, not a large one, Miss Robertson, the governess, being very indulgent to us. I took a fancy at once to one of the girls, Agnes Garth. She was about my own age, which was sixteen then, and one of the sweetest, best, loveliest girls I ever saw——"

"Lovelier than you?" I interrupted.

"How silly you are!" she exclaimed, laughing and blushing. "Of course I know that I am—not ugly; but I could not be compared with her. Not but that the girls thought us a little alike, in as much as that we were both fair, with bright complexions and the same coloured hair. They had given her a name, Beauty, and generally called her by it—Beauty Garth. I cannot tell you how I loved that girl: my father and mother were gone, and it seemed that all the love within me was concentrated upon her. She was so gentle, so kind, so good; a very angel."

I laughed.

"Ah well, it was so, Bessy. Miss Robertson used to say Agnes had no stability, that she might be swayed any way by those she loved; but it was an amiable weakness. We were like sisters all the two years we passed together. She never could think ill of anyone: she put trust in all the world. A sort of cloud hung over her——"

"A cloud?"

"Well, we never could find out who she was. The rest of us talked freely of our home and friends, of our past life; but she was silent as to hers, even to me. An impression obtained in the school—I know not whence derived—that her mother was an actress at a theatre in London. Her father she had never known—that much Agnes did tell us. Miss Robertson never spoke upon the subject: Agnes was treated just as the rest of us were, and we knew nothing."

"Did she go home for the holidays?"

"No; she passed them at school—as I usually did: and perhaps that served to draw us closer together. My two years were nearly up, when one day, when we were with the German master, Miss Robertson sent in for Agnes; and when the class was over and we got back to the ordinary school-room, we heard that Agnes had gone to London, in answer to some message received by the governess. She came back in a month's time in deep mourning, and told us her mother was dead. But, though her frank spirit was subdued and saddened by the loss, there was evidently some deeper joy within her that had not existed before. I found out what it was—Beauty was in love. She had met a gentleman in London, and was already secretly engaged to him. She would not tell me his name or who he was, though I asked it over and over again. 'There will be no necessity for me to be a governess now,' she said to me one day—

for that's what she was to have been, as her mother left her little, if any, fortune."

"How old was she, Susan?"

"Eighteen then, just as I was. This was last year. in the earlier part of it. I left the school at Easter, you may remember."

"Yes."

"The week previous to it I was invited to spend the evening with some people in the town who were kind to me, they having formerly lived near papa's rectory. Beauty was also invited out elsewhere the same evening. It chanced in returning home that we both reached the door together; an old maid-servant was my escort, Beauty's was a tall, handsome young man. She held his arm, and I divined, as by instinct, that her lover had come to Walborough. I had a good look at him; the gas-lamp shone right upon his face. He wished her good-night abruptly, and was turning away when Agnes stopped him. 'This is Miss Stanhope, of whom you have so often heard me speak,' she said: and of course politeness compelled him to stop and say a few words to me. Not many: before the door was opened to us, he had lifted his hat, and was gone. 'Don't tell of me, Susan,' Beauty entreatingly whispered; 'Miss Robertson might not like it?'"

"And did you tell?"

"Why, of course not, Bessy. Would we tell tales of one another? Besides, there was no harm, that I saw, in his just walking home with her. I supposed the friends she had been with sanctioned it."

"Go on."

"The next week I left school, and entered on the situation Miss Robertson had procured for me at Lady Leslie's. It was a long, long way from Walborough; about midway, you know, between that place and this, Penryn; Beauty and I could not expect to meet often, but we promised each other, amid our farewell tears and kisses, to correspond constantly. Bessy, I never got but two letters from her."

I felt surprised at Susan's tone more than at the words.

"But two letters. One of them was written from school; the other, only a week later, from London. She had left Walborough, she told me, and was staying with some friends in London until her marriage, which was to take place immediately, and she only wished I could go up to be her bridesmaid—which of course was not to be thought of. After that, I never heard from her."

"And have you never heard yet?"

"Listen. A few months later, at the close of August, I think, or beginning of September—I know it was a warm, hazy day—I was in the school-room, correcting exercises, my pupils being out walking with their French maid, when one of the servants came to say that a young lady was asking for me, and showed her in. It was Agnes: and, as the door closed, she fell into my arms with a sort of moan. How terribly the girl had changed in the five or six months since we

parted I cannot express to you, Bessy; her once lovely face had become thin and drawn, her once pretty, rounded shoulders sharp. I could not speak for dismay; I saw something was wrong. She clung to me sobbing and shivering. 'I was obliged to come to you on my journey, Susan, as this place lay in my way,' she gasped out; 'some power that I could not resist compelled me. It is only for a few minutes, Susan; only just to see you, Susan; and then I shall be gone again.' 'Are you married, dear Agnes?' I whispered, kissing her tenderly. 'I *thought* I was, Susan,' she said; 'I thought it all that while, though he would not let me tell you, or anyone:' and, with that, she sat down, poor weary girl, and laid her face, moaning, against the long desk. 'You speak of a journey, dear,' I said, 'where are you going?' But she did not answer. There was a faint bluish tinge about her lips that I did not like; evidently she needed both food and rest. The thought came over me to beg of Lady Leslie to allow her to stay a day or two with me. I felt sure she would, being a kind, motherly woman. 'Stay here a few moments, dear,' I whispered, kissing her wan cheek. 'I am going to bring you a glass of wine and a biscuit.' Lady Leslie, I found, was with friends in the drawing-room; I hardly knew what to do, not liking to call her out, or to speak before them. While I was hesitating they came out to depart, and then I spoke to Lady Leslie, telling a little of Beauty's history, and hinting at my fears that something was wrong. 'By all means, let Miss Garth stay for a few days,' Lady Leslie warmly said; 'if she is in distress or any kind of trouble, all the more need that her friends should see after her:' the children might have holiday, and I could devote myself entirely to her. I was so pleased and grateful, Bessy, that I burst into tears. Then I ran to get a glass of wine from the butler, and returned to the school-room. It was empty. Beauty was gone."

"Gone?"

"Quite gone. She must have left the school-room almost as soon as I: one of the servants met her in the hall and opened the door for her. Lady Leslie had enquiries made, and we found that Agnes had hastened back to the railway-station and taken the train onwards."

"To London?"

"No, she had come from London. It was to Cornwall. There was some trouble about her ticket—a through ticket—because she had left the train. The railway clerk said it was made out for St. Huth. Bessy, I have never seen or heard of her from that day to this."

"St. Huth is a small place about seven miles off beyond this."

"I know. I traced it out upon the map and in 'Bradshaw.' But now—why do you suppose I have told you this story?"

Leaning forward to me as she put the question, I could not fail to see that Susan was agitated; her soft colour went and came; her beautiful blue eyes were strangely bright.

"That man, Hubert Arlegh, who is to marry Miss Bertram, over whose feet the white hare passed and repassed to-night, startling him to terror, was the lover of Agnes Garth."

I uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"I knew him instantly, Bessy. Though I had seen him but once before, and then by gas-light, I recognized both himself and his voice, as he stood before me in the park lane to-night. It is a very peculiar voice: deep and gruff, as if it lay in his throat. You say Mr. Arlegh's name is Hubert. *His* name was Hubert. Agnes never called him anything else. And what I want to know is this: if he is going to marry Miss Bertram, where is Agnes?"

I could not answer. Thought upon thought crowded my mind, each more unwelcome than the last. All in a moment, *another* thought—or, rather, a recollection—came up; and it was the worst of all.

"When do you say this was, Susan?—that she came into Cornwall?"

"Just about a year ago."

Why yes, that was the very time. It was about a year ago now, so far as I could remember, that a young lady, weary, anxious, footsore, found her way to the Widow Mellon's cottage. She lay ill there for two days, and then disappeared. They could not tell what became of her; nobody else could tell. Minnie Mellon told a curious tale—but, as people said, she was only a child. Nothing of this did I disclose to Susan, though the description of this young lady, given to me by Mrs. Mellon's sister, who was then at the cottage, was exactly like the one Susan gave of Agnes Garth. It would not do for us Trenathys to bring up ought against Mr. Arlegh. Once his marriage with Miss Bertram had taken place he would be our landlord to all intents and purposes—and my father would want his lease renewed the year after next.

We got to bed at last: but I could not speak for thinking of it all.—of the story told by Susan, of Miss Bertram's ill-luck to be engaged to such a man, of the uncertain fate of poor Agnes Garth, and last, though not least, of the white hare that had run over Mr. Arlegh's feet. I must have a spice of romance in my composition, I take it, for that white hare kept pushing itself into my thoughts above all the rest of the perplexity.

There had been some trouble lately with our poultry, especially the geese; many had sickened, and died; and in the morning, as soon as my various duties were over, I put on my sun-bonnet to run down to Michael Hart's, who was gamekeeper to Miss Bertram, to consult his wife, for she was learned in poultry. Mary Hart was not at home. However, Michael, smoking his after-dinner pipe at the cottage door, said she had stepped over towards the swamp-land, with a bit of stewed rabbit for old Widow Loam, who was ill—thought to be

dying. I hardly knew whether to wait for Mary Hart or not; it was nearly one o'clock, our dinner-hour. Michael thought she would not be long; so down I sat upon the bench outside the kitchen-window and talked to him.

"Are there any white hares about, Michael?"

"White hares!" he exclaimed in his slow way, turning his head to look at me. "Why no, Miss Bessy, we've no game o' that sort."

"My cousin, Miss Stanhope, thought she saw a white hare cross the park lane yesterday evening."

"Must ha' been a rabbit," said Michael—just as I had said to Susan. "Folks don't like the white hares in this country," he added, changing his pipe from one hand to the other. "They bode no good when seen."

"But how can they be seen if there are none, Michael?"

"Well, it's thought they white hares are not real hares, but spirits, Miss Bessy; apparitions. I never saw a white hare but once, and don't want to see one again."

"You have seen one, then?"

"I saw that one, Miss Bessy. It's a matter o' ten years ago. Do you remember as fur back as that?"

"Of course I do, Michael. I am twenty-two."

"In that red house over yonder—you can see its chimbleys above the trees—lived old Trehern and his wife and son. Young Trehern was a bit wild, and gave 'em some trouble—but you'd know naught about that. One autumn day, when I was out with Sir William and a party and the guns and dogs, young Trehern, who made one o' the gentlemen, lagged behind the rest, telling me of a dog of his that had been sick; when, just as we were crossing the five-cornered coppice, a white hare—as it looked—ran out o' the brushwood right over his feet. Right over his feet, Miss Bessy; I never saw such a thing afore. Young Trehern didn't much like it; I could see that; and he jumped aside ever so far. He thought of the superstition, I suppose, but he made light of it to me. 'What thing was that, Hart?' says he, swearing a bit and shaking his feet, as if he'd shake off the touch the thing had left on his boot. 'It looked uncommon like a hare, sir,' says I, 'but 'twas gone so quick there's no telling.' We went on then, and no more passed. Nine days after that young Trehern died. He was throwed out of his gig coming home from a dinner, and was killed on the spot."

"And now, Michael, what is the superstition?"

Michael smoked for a full minute in his slow way before attempting to answer.

"It's not much the sort o' thing to tell to young ladies, Miss Bessy."

"But I want to know it. I have a very particular reason for wishing to know it. I am a woman grown, remember, Michael; not a child."

"Well, as to young Trehern, he had talked and laughed too much with Patty, the Widow Loam's daughter—her, by token, that Mary's gone to take the bit o' rabbit to—and then turned round and laughed at her for it. A pretty young thing she was; and 'twas told that the widow cursed him. I did not know how that might have been. Any way, Patty died of it."

"But the superstition, Michael?"

"That *is* the superstition, Miss Bessy. When a young girl gets treated in that way and dies of it, she comes back in the form of a white hare, whenever his own death shall be nigh at hand; comes back in love to give him warning of it."

A slight shiver took me at the words. Could Mr. Arlegh's death be near at hand? What a foolish thought! I mentally said, and threw off the shiver and superstition together. That we Cornish people hold to many ridiculous fancies I know, but surely not to one so ridiculous as this.

"Your wife does not seem to return, Michael," I said, rising from the bench; "so I will not wait longer. Perhaps she can come up to the farm; I should like her to see the geese."

"She'll come safe enough, Miss Bessy."

But, do what I would, I could not get these matters out of my mind. Not the superstition; that did not linger in it much; but the story Susan had told of Agnes Garth, and the curious likeness that seemed to exist between her and the girl who had gone to Mrs. Mellon's, and the coincidence as regarded the time.

That afternoon we had tea unusually early, four o'clock, to accommodate my father, who was going out. I contrived to run down alone to Mrs. Mellon's afterwards: I wanted to question her. Susan was busy over some strips of beautiful old pillow lace that had been her mother's, and which had got yellow with lying by. It had been washed that afternoon and Susan was pulling it out preparatory to spreading it on the grass to bleach. It served as an excuse for my leaving her.

"What was the young lady like who came here about a year ago, Miss Bessy?" repeated Mrs. Mellon, in answer to me. "Well, you know, miss, I couldn't see her myself; but my sister Ann, who was over here just then, couldn't talk enough about her beauty and her wan looks and her dreadful sadness."

"Very fair, was she not?—with blue eyes?"

"Oh very fair, and her eyes the bluest and sweetest and saddest, and her hair a bright golden colour. Minnie here was talking of her only last night, miss: she said that the young lady who came here from your house with the wool had just the same beautiful golden hair."

It seemed to me like a confirmation, and I drew a long breath. "Will you tell me the particulars of her coming, and of her stay here?" I asked.

"It is a matter of a year ago, Miss Bessy. We were having our tea at this round table one afternoon, Ann, and me, and the child, when we heard a sort of stir outside, and Ann went to the door. There stood at it a young girl dressed in black, pale and weary, as if she had travelled far, with a wan, lovely face. Would we allow her to sit down for a few minutes, she asked, and give her a drink of water, for she felt faint. Ann brought her in, and she fainted right off in the chair as she sat down. Well, Miss Bessy, we undressed her and put her into Minnie's bed, for she was a great deal too ill and weak to go away that night. And in that bed she stayed nigh upon three days, not strong enough to get out of it, and crying a'most all the time, and——"

"Did she tell you her name?" I interrupted.

"She never told her name, nor where she belonged to, nor anything else about herself. But she did say she had walked over from St. Huth early that morning. We thought she must have been waiting about here all the day since, as if waiting for somebody, for two or three people saw her; and Michael Hart he said—but he told me afterwards I had better not speak of that," broke off Mrs Mellon, "so I'll let it alone. On the third day she got up, Miss Bessy, and I remember well as she sat here with me after our bit of dinner—Ann was gone—she asked me many questions about Miss Bertram and the marriage it was said she was going to make with Mr. Arlegh—just as if she had knowed Miss Rosy afore. Leastways it struck me so, and I put the question to her plain. No, she had never seen Miss Bertram in her life, she answered, but she had heard of her. After that, I heard her stirring about, and it seemed that she was putting her bonnet and mantle on to leave. I asked her whether she was sure she was strong enough, and whether she had far to go. 'Not far, only a very little way,' she answered me, and she felt quite strong. With that, she took off a locket that she had worn on her neck, fastened to some blue ribbon, and put it upon Minnie's neck. 'Keep it, my dear,' she said to her; 'it is all I have to give you, and I shall not want it where I am going.' Upon that she wished me good-bye very hastily, and was gone from the door afore I could say a word, leaving (as I found afterwards) a gold sovereign wrapped in a bit o' paper on the table at my elbow. 'Run, Minnie,' I says, 'and see which way she goes, and watch her a bit,' for I thought it likely she might faint again, besides feeling anxious about her. So Minnie ran, and watched her ever so far—down to the swamp-land, wasn't it child?"

"Yes, mother," replied Minnie, an elfish-looking child of ten, who had been listening with both her ears. "I kept behind her all the way, watching her till I couldn't see her no longer. She went down the lane to the swamp-land, and she never came out again."

"Never came out again," I exclaimed, the phrase striking me as an odd one. "How do you mean, Minnie?"

"She never did come out," replied Minnie. "I stood watching for her ever so long."

"The child means that she never saw her come out," put in the mother. "She didn't like to follow her too close, for fear of being seen."

"Did you follow her down the lane, Minnie?"

"After a bit I did. I saw her under they willows that edges the swamp on this side, and I stopped by the trees half way down the land to see where she went to. When I didn't see her come back nor nothing, I went on to they willows too, but she was gone."

"But where could she go to?" I cried, something like a panic seizing my heart. "She could not walk over the swamp to gain the road: she would sink into it."

"I'm sure she never came back down the lane," repeated Minnie. "I never see her come."

"She must have managed to get round the swamp by they dwarf stumps o' trees, Miss Bessy, and so gained the high road that way," put in Mrs. Mellon, her quiet, matter-of-fact tone proving that no worse thought had ever occurred to her.

"You do not think she could have—have got *into* the swamp?" I asked, scarcely above my breath.

The woman turned her sightless face to me in surprise. Minnie stared with wondering eyes. The idea to them seemed very far-fetched.

"Why no, Miss Bessy, there was no fear o' that kind. There wouldn't be. Had the poor young lady lost her footing and fell in, which was not likely, she'd naturally ha' cried out; and there was Minnie at hand to hear her."

The conviction that, had she put herself in purposely she would *not* have cried out, ran through my mind like a flash of lightning: and then I mentally called myself a wicked girl for thinking it. "Would you let me see the locket she gave Minnie?" I asked aloud.

Dame Mellon took a small key from her pocket, felt her way to the dresser, and unlocked a tea-caddy that stood on it. "I keep it locked up for fear Minnie should lose it," she remarked, placing it in my hands; "they small things is so easy dropped, and children be so careless."

Ah! no need to take a second look. The golden locket had a lock of golden hair inside it—Susan's hair beyond all doubt—and it bore the inscription "Susan to Agnes."

"I should like to show this to my cousin: it is very pretty," I said impulsively. "Will you let me take it home, Mrs. Mellon? You shall have it back to-morrow."

Ready permission was given, and I was desired not to be in a hurry to return the locket. The old woman took her stick, and walked with me, talking, to the little bridge. Some children were playing at the entrance to the park lane, and Minnie ran off to them.

"I wish you would tell me one thing," I said in a low tone—

"what it was that Michael Hart told you. You may trust me, you know."

"Dear, yes, I may, Miss Bessy. Well, Michael saw the young lady that same afternoon, talking with Mr. Arlegh in the coppice. He was coming home from shooting, and she darted out from the coppice, as if she had put herself there to wait for him, and laid her hand upon his arm. Mr. Arlegh shook her hand off, and swore at her; asking where she had sprung from, and what she wanted: Michael heard that much, as he walked onwards with the dogs. Half an hour later he came by again and they were there still. She was crying and moaning bitterly; and he was calling her a tramp, in harsh tones, and threatening to give her into custody for molesting him, unless she went back at once to 'whence she came.' Michael didn't know how the quarrel ended; except that Mr. Arlegh must have left her there, for he presently saw him cross the park lane on his way to the Hall. It wasn't a thing to talk about, you see, Miss Bessy, and that's why he wanted me to be silent."

All sorts of troubles were worrying my brain as I went home. It was poor Agnes Garth safe enough. But what could I do in it? And where was she?

Very much to my surprise, when I came within sight of our gate, I saw Mr. Arlegh's horse fastened to it, and himself on the grass-plat with Susan. She had her hands folded before her, and her face, as she spoke to him, wore a cold, haughty expression. Suddenly he wheeled round on his heel, came out, mounted his horse and rode past me, not vouchsafing me any notice by word or look. Susan explained to me what had happened.

She was spreading her lace on the grass, putting a stone at the ends of each piece to secure it, when Mr. Arlegh rode by. Seeing Susan, he checked his horse suddenly, dismounted, and came in.

"So you are one of Farmer Trenathy's daughters, my dear," he began, in a free tone that Susan did not like at all. "And where have you been hiding yourself pray, that I never saw you before last night?"

"Mr. Trenathy is my uncle," replied Susan, turning from the lace to face him.

"Have you come to live here?"

"No."

"To stay for a time, at any rate, I conclude. I am very glad. It is not often we get such beauty as yours in this out-of-the-world place."

"Mr. Arlegh," began Susan, "you have taken upon yourself to ask me questions. In return, may I put one or two to you?"

"Fifty if you like, my dear. The more the better."

"When you were quite a lad, were you not placed for three or four years with the Reverend Philip Stanhope, of Grassmere? That lad's name was, I know, Hubert Arlegh."

"Just so. Mr. Stanhope was my tutor."

"You respected and liked him, I believe."

"Liked and respected Stanhope! I just did. What next?"

"I am his daughter—Miss Stanhope—and a gentlewoman, Mr. Arlegh."

He seemed quite taken to, and his face flushed, Susan said. But he had the grace to change his manner to one of respect, offered his hand, and said he was glad to see her.

"There is another question I wish to ask you, and it is a painful one," Susan went on; "one very painful to me to put. Can you tell me where Agnes Garth is?"

He stared at her for a moment, his countenance visibly changing. "Agnes Garth!" he presently rejoined, breaking the silence. "I do not know any one of the name."

"I think you did know her, Mr. Arlegh. She was my best friend, dear to me as a sister: we were at school together at Walborough. For this past twelvemonth I have been anxiously waiting for news from her, watching for it daily: and it never comes."

"I protest I cannot understand why you should say this to me, Miss Stanhope," he replied, his manner cold, his tone repellant. "I never heard of the person you mention. Allow me to wish you good evening." And, with that, he turned quickly, as I had seen him turn, and took his departure.

Susan told me this as we sat side by side on the bench under the large pear-tree, the horse's hoofs dying away in our ears as they grew more distant. I held out the gold locket on my glove.

"Do you know this, Susan?"

She caught hold of it, gave one look, and burst into tears. "Oh Bessy, where did you get this? It was the keepsake I gave to Agnes when I left school. She gave me that pretty cross that I wear, in exchange."

I told her all—even my doubts and fears about the swamp. It is true I had not meant to say so much: but tales, at such moments, expand in the telling. "But, Susan dear," I added, in conclusion, "you must keep all this strictly quiet. It would not do to stir in it for my father's sake."

"*I* keep it quiet!" she retorted, turning her tearful eyes upon me. "Why, Bessy, do you imagine this is a thing we mortals can control? If my poor Agnes does indeed lie in that swamp-land, rely upon it that a Higher Power holds its elucidation in His hands."

The stars were beginning to twinkle in the sky, the moon was rising, the scent of the closing flowers was almost lost on the cool air; and still we sat on. Out came Eunice, wondering why we stayed there when we must know the early supper was ready.

"You will take me to look at this swamp-land to-morrow, Bessy," whispered Susan, as we rose. "I cannot rest until I see it." And I promised.

But, like many another promise, it was not fated to be performed. Some friends, not expected, came over from St. Huth in the morning to spend the day with us, and the next day it was raining, pouring cats and dogs—as Janey said when she had to go through it to school; aye, and the next day also. Altogether, the following week had come in when we went.

The sun, glowing and red, and nearing its setting, was shining on this marsh land as we gazed upon it. It was a curious looking spot—half water, half earth, wholly black mud—as it seemed to Susan. In Sir William's time he would not have had this bay touched—it would be valuable sometime, he said, but *he* should not trouble himself to make it so. It lay about as far from our house, on that side, as the Hall did on the other. The willows, spoken of by Mrs. Mellon, drooped over the edge of a portion of it, then came a crowd of rushes, then the dwarf trees, some of them only stumps.

"You see, Susan," I observed, "she could have crept round by the rushes and stumps, and so gained the road."

"Yes, I see," replied Susan; "it would have been possible, I suppose. On the other hand, she may have thrown herself in, to escape her troubled life."

"*Don't* think it, Susan, for heaven's sake!"

As we regained the road, which was narrow just there, not much better, indeed, than a lane, Miss Bertram drove up in her pretty low carriage, drawn by its cream-coloured pony, Mr. Arlegh sitting beside her. She pulled up to speak to me, and he raised his hat.

Suddenly, as if it sprang out of the ground, for I'm sure I saw not where else it could have come from, a white hare was disporting itself under the pony's feet. Whether it was a real hare or a phantom, the pony became curiously terrified, his eyes glaring, his mouth foaming. The hare disappeared almost instantly, but the animal continued to rear and plunge. Miss Bertram was a remarkably timid girl, although she did drive this hitherto quiet pony: she dropped the reins, and would have leaped out. Mr. Arlegh prevented her, jumped out himself, and went to the pony's head. He had not, I am sure, seen the hare.

But he saw now. The hare—and this seemed to me the strangest part of it—the hare, which had certainly disappeared, was back again, running over *his* feet. With a sort of suppressed yell, Mr. Arlegh jumped back and loosed his hold of the pony. Again the hare had disappeared; he re-caught the pony's head, and Miss Bertram jumped out.

"Selim, what can be the matter with you?" she cried, addressing the pretty and trembling cream-coloured animal. "Did you see anything frighten him?" she added to me. "Did you, Hubert?"

But what could I answer? Nothing. Mr. Arlegh was now leading the pony forward, and when he seemed quiet, they got in and drove off, Mr. Arlegh taking the reins.

Once more, but this time we only knew of it by hearsay, Mr. Arlegh was frightened by the white hare. It was on the following Sunday. He was walking across the churchyard with our clergyman, Mr. Chasnel, they having stayed in the vestry after service to discuss some parish business, when, just as they were going by old Mrs. Barton's high tomb, a white hare ran across Mr. Arlegh's feet; seemed to *stand* on them for a moment.

"Why that looked just like a hare!" cried the clergyman. "Where's it gone to? Has it startled you?" he added to Mr. Arlegh, seeing that his face had turned whiter than death.

"I—don't know what it was," replied Mr. Arlegh, as they looked about. But the hare was gone.

The Reverend Charles Chasnel talked of this—that's how it came to be known. He told people that he had seen a white hare. Being a stranger in Cornwall, just appointed to the living, he had never heard of the superstition.

"What news do you think I have got?" cried Roger, coming in to breakfast on the Tuesday morning. "That old bog is going to be redeemed. Drained, and——"

"I'll believe it when I see it," interrupted father. "Sir William was always talking of that, but he never did it, and the fields around are nothing but a marsh. It has long been the shame of the place."

"It is really going to be done now," said Roger, smiling at his father's vehemence. Some gentlemen are coming to the Hall to-day about it; scientific men from London; and the work is to be begun immediately. The bailiff himself told me. They say," and here Roger laughed outright, "that there's great value in that swamp, as it now is."

Father looked at him quite angrily. "*Value* in it?"

"In the mud—or the water—or both combined. They talk of its chemical properties? It is Mr. Arlegh who has set all this in motion, Stone says, and has persuaded Miss Bertram to have it done."

"Time it was," grunted father. That swamp had always been a sore point with him.

Not that day, but the next, during the afternoon, we saw several gentlemen, followed by some rough workmen—not our ordinary country labourers—go down the road on their way to the swamp. Mr. Arlegh was first and foremost of them. He looked wonderfully handsome, was talking eagerly and laughing gaily, just as though he had forgotten the white hare.

But—it is the sad truth—before the sun had well set that night he was carried back past our gate, cold and dead.

That excursion to the swamp was a fatal one. I cannot tell you precisely what happened, or how; nor is it necessary. For some purpose or other, the workmen began dragging the swamp near the willows—perhaps to see what sort of mud it really was. The first

thing they got up, apart from mud, was a black bonnet; the second looked like a rake full of golden hair. That made them drag on again with a purpose: and they drew up a young lady.

It was poor Agnes Garth. And her face presented the most wonderfully-preserved appearance. Hubert Arlegh could not fail to recognise her. Those around him told afterwards how he turned cold and sick.

But, in the excitement of this finding, they had been neglecting proper precautions, and had ventured too far over the swamp, standing on the pieces of wood that jutted out from the old fence. The wood had become porous and rotten, and it broke: and one of them fell down into the swamp, uttering a shrill and bitter cry. It was Mr. Arlegh.

He had sunk utterly; was gone clean out of sight; and he did not rise again. As soon as the apparatus could be disentangled from what it had already brought up, it was sent down again in search of him. He was quite dead; choked probably by the poisonous mud: and, do what they would, they could not restore life to him.

Many a year has gone by since then. My father is at rest in the churchyard, and I am Bessy Trenathy still. I am at the old home with Roger and his delicate wife, who whispers to me that she hopes I shall never leave it—for what would the children do without Aunt Bessy?

Susan married Charles Chasnel. He did not long remain in Cornwall; he had good connections and interest, got better and better preferment, and is now Dean of W. She meets Lady Calloway—formerly Miss Bertram—sometimes in society, and they rarely fail to exchange a word about the old place, Penryn. But there's one topic Susan never talks about, save to me, and perhaps once in a way to her husband, and that is the sad history of the past: of the ill-fated Agnes and of Hubert Arlegh and the warning of the phantom hare.

M. H.

BOY BERTIE.

Boy Bertie sat within the organ-loft,
And ever and anon he musing played
A snatch of melody so faint, so soft,
It was as if he prayed.

Through the stained window looking on the west
The last and sweetest of the sunbeams came;
Purple and gold, azure and amethyst,
Arrows of light and flame.

Yet nothing saw he of the light that lay
Down the long aisle in ever changing guise;
For day was as the night, and night as day
Unto his steadfast eyes.

And still his slender hand soft music woke,
And still he turned as he would catch the light;
And by-and-by a sigh unconscious broke
From one who marked the sight.

Boy Bertie paused, his fingers on the keys:
"Sigh not," he said, "if you did sigh for me:
Fair things you may behold; more fair than these—
The visions that *I* see."

For well he guessed her grief and probed her thought,
So keen is love to light on sorrow's scar.
"Tell me," the mother murmured, "tell me what
These wondrous visions are."

He, for all answer to her whispered words,
Bade the majestic organ speak again;
And slowly, slowly, through the swelling chords
Crept a more tender strain.

The crimson faded into palest gold,
The gold to grey, that dusky grew and dim;
Blind Bertie heeded not, as thus he told
The thoughts most dear to him.

Nor heeded that lone listener, who knelt
In speechless wonderment beside the boy;
Closing her loving eyes, because she felt
They brimmed with tears of joy.

The slanting sunbeams rest on Bertie's grave;
The mother pictures, many a time and oft,
How they are falling down a silent nave,
And in the organ-loft.

SYDNEY GREY.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1879.

CALLED TO THE RESCUE.

CHAPTER XVI.

A NEW FRIEND.

WHEN Paul Rocket, at the desire of his master, seconded by the advice of Sir Marcus Combermere, undertook the office of keeping watch over Cosmo Dangerfield's movements, he did so with a full appreciation of the risk that he ran. While in that great philosopher's employment, he had necessarily become a sharer of some of the secrets on which the success of his philosophy depended; and had, indeed, been admitted deeper into the mysteries than any other acolyte of his age. That the Professor would resent his leaving his service as he had done, and cordially embracing the cause of Miss Stormount, as he had now made up his mind to do, Paul had no doubt whatever; and his only surprise was, that he had suppressed his resentment so long. What would be the result of a meeting between them, he felt was quite uncertain; he had a lurking dread of his late master's skill and knowledge, and was by no means disposed to brave them unprepared. But his professional training gave him several advantages of which he was not slow to avail himself; and being fortified with a good store of provision in his pockets, and supplied with cash to purchase more, if wanted, he was ready to lie in ambush, or play the spy, all day long: keeping himself carefully out of Dangerfield's sight, but never relaxing his watch on all that he did.

The necessity of concealing his own person made it impossible for him to come to Emily's assistance in time; all he could do, he did. He ran across the fields, regardless of the snow; caught

the coach as it passed, and without requiring it to stop, jumped up behind like a monkey. The guard was too much diverted with his agility to take offence; and the other outside passengers, being only two sturdy farmers, had compassion on the boy's wet clothes, and lent him a thick great-coat, in which he was glad to disguise himself from any eye that might be too inquisitive for safety.

In some of Ernest's suffering hours lately, he had amused himself with his page's experiences, and had learned of him a code of private signals and communications, very useful in such conjuring as requires a confederate. Paul, as he crouched between two great hampers, in his frieze coat, recollected this, and felt sure his master would do the same. He had pencil and paper at hand, and soon prepared missives which would be unintelligible to any reader but Mr. Archdale.

"He will follow himself, if the breath is in his body," he thought, "and he will never grudge money in such a cause." And wherever the coach stopped, and it was possible to do so, one of these cabalistic messages was left in somebody's keeping, backed by a shilling fee, and the assurance that Mr. Archdale would give another.

Coach hire and fees to messengers made some inroad on Paul's finances, but he contrived to keep the chase in sight to the inn where they had their meal, hanging about the stable first, and making friends with the hostler, and then repeating the performance in the bar. Here he heard that the gentleman and his daughter were going by the seven o'clock train, and had his dispatch prepared accordingly. Concealed behind a post, he saw the Professor put Emily into a fly, and, just before getting in himself, give an order to the driver. What it was he could not hear; but favoured by the darkness he jumped up at the back of the carriage, and soon saw that they were going in a different direction from the one he had been led to expect. The place was all new to his experience, and when he judged it wiser to relinquish his perch, it required no little activity to follow the fly to its destination. Once there, however, he had no more difficulty, except to ascertain to what station the Professor was going.

"Can one get to London this way?" he asked a porter, and was informed that he could, only he would have to change and wait a certain time at one of the great junctions: accordingly Paul took a ticket to that junction, trusting to the chapter of accidents for getting further, as he had not quite half a crown left. Of this residue, another shilling went in leaving a message, and what to do without a fresh supply he could not clearly see.

"I must stop their running, somehow or other," he thought, "or they'll throw me out altogether." And the reflection that Emily had recognised him, and was aware that he was following, strung his nerves to the pitch of daring all consequences, sooner than lose the advantage he had gained. He saw them alight, and had just time to station himself on the bridge, with a cord ready noosed for such

a trick as had more than once brought him applause in the circus. The Professor, unwitting of the science so near at hand, allowed his foot to be caught. The consequences we have seen in his heavy fall, and the separation from his step-daughter: whom we have left all this while, as he left her, huddling her dog to her bosom, and not knowing whether to go on or turn back.

Her suspense was soon ended, by feeling an arm of protection against the pressure of the crowd, while a voice in her ear sounded like music.

"All right, Miss Emily; I'll take care of you and Coco."

The child's innocent faith had never failed; she had believed what her friends told her, and it seemed quite natural that help should come. She gave up Coco without hesitation, and put her hand in Paul's, with a sense of security and comfort that compensated for the troubles of the journey. He hurried her back to the platform they had just quitted, and, unobserved by anyone, gained the door of the station. The lights of the town gleamed brightly at a little distance; they were standing on the highroad, and as Paul looked up and down no vehicle was in sight.

"Miss Emily, can you walk a little way, do you think?" said he, cheerfully. "I daresay we shall find some house where you can rest, if you can hold out till then."

The fact was, though he did not tell her so, the vision of Cosmo Dangerfield returning in a state of exasperation to reclaim his companion, or telegraphing to have her stopped, convinced Paul that the first thing to be done was to hide her somewhere; and though he knew nothing of the locality, he was sure there would be some inn where she might be sheltered, if only they could reach it in time. There was no return train for several hours, and Paul would gladly have remained at the station, had it been safe; but, besides the risk of being detained, he had seen as they passed the waiting-room that it was being locked up, and there was nothing for it but to find better quarters further on. Emily assured him she was not tired. Indeed, the relief of exercise and the joy of deliverance seemed to put fresh vigour into her limbs, as she stepped out on the hard, frosty road in perfect confidence that Paul knew where to go, and that they should soon come to a house, with a warm fire.

"Did they send you, Paul?" was her first question, when they had walked a little way. He was listening for the sound of the departing trains, and did not answer. "Did they send you, Paul?" Then Paul explained that he had seen her put into the coach, and as he thought she did not like it, determined to follow, and help her to go back to Miss Granard.

"How very kind of you, Paul. Are we going back to her now?"

"We cannot start before morning, Miss Emily. Have you any money with you?"

"No, but I have some locked up in Adela's box."

"That won't help us much," was Paul's inward reflection, as he thought of his eighteenpence, and the impossibility of paying railway fares, or telegraphic messages, out of the surplus. But he hinted nothing of this to Emily, only talked cheerily about the good supper Coco would have presently, and thence diverged into stories about other dogs, of wonderful sagacity and unmatched cleverness, beguiling the way as best he could, while discovering it to be much longer than he had at first supposed. The wind, too, had risen, and in spite of her warm cloak he felt the child shiver, and every minute made him more and more anxious to find a warm shelter for her head. No pursuit being attempted, though he looked back from time to time, almost expecting to hear a policeman summon him to stop, he began to revolve in his mind by what expedient he could obtain a supply of money with which to convey her home. Several schemes presented themselves to his fertile imagination, but all contained some insuperable difficulty in being carried out; and while still weighing two of these against each other, he was roused by a carriage rattling past him so suddenly, that the coachman shouted as he passed that he had better take care where he was going.

"It would be very nice to drive in that carriage," said Emily, 'and here comes another—oh, and another. There must be a party somewhere."

So Paul perceived, and that they were near the house, for they had reached the suburb of the town, full of detached residences, standing within gates, a pair of which had been thrown open for the ingress and egress of visitors and their equipages. Before he was aware, he had been driven with his charge to the shelter of some evergreens within the precincts, to avoid being run over by two carriages, each trying to get before the other. The wind was now blowing keenly, and some sharp sleet drove into their faces; making her cling to him for protection, with a gasping, "Oh, Paul—Paul!"

"Why don't you go on to the house?" shouted the coachman nearest to the two, supposing the young lady to be one of the guests, living near enough to walk to her evening's amusement. It really looked easier to go forward than to return, for more carriages were behind, and if only Emily could be sheltered under the portico for five minutes, while he asked his way to the nearest inn, it would be something. So Paul pushed on to the portico.

"This way, if you please," cried a civil servant at the open door: and Emily, without knowing what was going to be done with her, was shown into a warm room full of ladies' cloaks and shawls, and the door closed behind her.

The careless maid who ought to have been on duty in that apartment had left it for a chat and a cup of tea on her own score. The tired child, after waiting a little while for some one to tell her what to do, sat down among the shawls and cloaks. As may easily

be imagined, she was very soon fast asleep, with her head on the fur lining of one of the mantles; the distant sound of music and dancing feet mingling with her dreams.

She woke suddenly with a start, and sat up, not knowing where she was, or what had happened to her. But her hand was taken by one that was very soft and tender, and a kind voice said, "Do not be frightened, my dear, but tell me who you are."

Emily looked up, and her senses becoming a little clearer, she perceived that an old lady was bending over her; such an old lady as she had sometimes seen in pictures, with lovely white hair, a sweet smile, and a gracious manner. So gracious, that the child was calmed unconsciously, and answered without hesitation.

"I am Emily Stormount, ma'am."

"And why does Emily Stormount go to sleep on my cloak, instead of going home to bed?" asked the white-haired stranger, sitting down by the little girl's side, without relinquishing her hand.

"I can't go home to bed till to-morrow morning. And the wind blew very cold, and the carriages crowded so, we had to come in to get out of the way; and the man put me in here."

"You did not come to the dance then, my little woman?"

"No, but I thought it must be very nice and warm when I saw the lights in the windows. Please, ma'am, may I have Coco?"

"Cocoa, my dear? To drink, do you mean?" asked the old lady, somewhat surprised, as well she might be.

"No, ma'am, he is my dog, and Paul is carrying him for me. Paul is very kind; he never cares how long he carries him."

"And who is Paul?"

"I don't quite know who he is, but he is now Mr. Archdale's servant, and he is taking me home."

"If this is the way he takes you home, dear child, you will be a long time getting there. What is his master?"

"Mr. Ernest Archdale is an officer, and very often ill, and very kind to me."

"Ernest Archdale? Where did you see him?"

"At Sir Marcus Combermere's—and Mrs. Archdale was there too. We live very near them, in Mrs. Keith's lodgings."

The old lady uttered an exclamation which Emily did not understand, and rang the bell hastily. On the appearance of a maid, she ordered a tray of refreshments from the supper-room to be brought, and also that the servant who attended on Miss Stormount should be sent to her directly.

"And tell your mistress that I shall be glad to speak to her as soon as she is at leisure."

The maid stared at Emily, but evidently knew that the old lady was not to be disobeyed, for she hurried away immediately. Paul, and the tray, and her mistress appeared almost simultaneously. The latter, somewhat startled by the unexpected summons, was begin-

ning to ask anxiously if dear Mrs. Raymond felt unwell, but Mrs. Raymond's smile at once relieved her of that anxiety.

"You have given us a charming evening, full of pretty surprises, my dear Fanny, but you do not know, perhaps, that your house is haunted by fairies, and that Snowdrop, looking for her seven brothers, has been caught asleep in an old woman's fur cloak. Here is a dear, tired child for whom I have bespoken some supper, before taking her home with me. She is a friend of my daughter's, and so I have the first right in her, though I accept your hospitality so far."

The quick ear of Paul had caught the words, "my daughter," and the remembrance of a photograph in his master's dressing-case explained the matter at once. He was ready with answers to the questions put to him, as to his position in Ernest's service and the state of his health; but with regard to Miss Stormount he was more reserved. The young lady had got separated from her friends, and was put into the wrong train, he said, and he had made bold to take what care of her he could, as he knew his master would wish him to do. He had meant to take her to the nearest inn for the night, and their coming into the house had been to avoid an accident.

"I am sure my friend Mrs. Donne is very glad you came in; this dear child is very young to be travelling at night in this way. As soon as she has finished her supper, if you will be good enough to ask for Mrs. Raymond's carriage, I will take you all home with me; and as your master is my dear grandson, I will answer for his giving leave."

"Pray go and get some supper yourself," said Mrs. Donne, who was coaxing Emily, and petting Coco, with a cordiality that testified to her regard for her old friend's wishes; and Paul, seeing both his charges so well provided for, was not at all sorry to obey. Though maintaining his discreet reserve, he contrived to throw out hints, which made a due impression on the servants who heard them; and the report that a young heiress had been nearly run over, and had taken shelter at Mrs. Donne's, spread, as reports do, with wonderful rapidity, causing a sensation of curiosity and interest which the hostess had some difficulty in satisfying. All she knew was that the child had a striking countenance, and looked much too delicate to be travelling by night. It was a mysterious story altogether, but her dear old friend had taken it all into her own hands, and she would be sure to do what was best. They would hear more, no doubt, when the poor child was sufficiently rested to explain.

That the little wanderer needed rest, and must not be harassed with questions, was but too plain to the benevolent old lady who had carried her off. She put her arm round her in the carriage, and let her weary head lie on her shoulder; while Coco, after a little hesitation, took up his place on her lap, finding the fur cloak as much to his taste as his young mistress had done. Fortunately, they had not far to go.

Mrs. Raymond lived in what could truly be called a cottage, for

it was as small as a lady's house could well be, her carriage being only a hired fly, and her establishment limited to one maid. A maid of marvellous energy and cleverness, never so happy as when doing the work of four, and knowing that her two hands were worth their eight.

To this invaluable retainer Mrs. Raymond addressed herself as soon as she appeared at the door.

"Come here, Bennet; I have a present for you."

Paul opened the carriage door, and Bennet stepped out smiling, quite ready to be agreeably surprised.

"Here is a wandering princess come to the old fairy's hut in the woods, Bennet, and she is to be put into a warm bed and dream of fairyland till morning. And here is the identical dog that came out of the nutshell, and *he* is to be put to bed too, in her room; and there is one of her six wonderful servants, who is also to be made much of, though which of them he will turn out to be I cannot say. They all three came off the Christmas-tree on purpose for us, so we must prize them accordingly."

Bennet knew her lady well enough to accept all this as a most charming increase of property, congratulated her on being so fortunate, and helped out Emily and Coco with most respectful looks of welcome. The intelligence that the young lady had no luggage, but was to be provided with what was necessary, produced only a "Certainly, ma'am;" and Paul was requested to follow as readily as if there had been a servants' hall in which to entertain him, instead of the tiny kitchen, opposite the parlour, where she had been getting up her mistress's lace and cambric, by way of passing the evening.

"You will find a fire there," she said cheerfully, "only please excuse the table being covered. I will come and clear it directly, and see about your bed. You won't mind roughing it for one night, I daresay."

If this were roughing it, Paul wondered what smoothness would be. Certainly, there was no roughness for Emily, who was allowed to look about her in the exquisite little parlour; which was more like an emporium of fine arts, than an ordinary place to live in, with its carved wood and delicate china, choice pictures, and filigree ornaments of the good old workmen, who wrought as artists, not as traders. The paper, the curtains, the chintz, were all in harmony, and in the most perfect taste; and a delicate odour pervaded the atmosphere, which might have been from freshly plucked roses, but was really the product of the distiller's cunning. A small clear fire burned in the grate, and Mrs. Raymond's easy-chair and work-basket were ready on one side. Before anything could be suggested, a tempting seat had been placed near it for the stranger, and Coco was invited to the snowy hearthrug, which looked as if no coals or smoke ever came near it, and on which he curled himself as if it was no more than his due. A small, shaded lamp was lighted, and then Bennet

vanished to make the needful preparations elsewhere, for they owned no such luxury as a spare room.

Mrs. Raymond threw off her cloak, sat down in her arm-chair, and drew Emily into the seat beside her. "Well, little Snowdrop," she said, seeing the child's earnest eyes fixed upon her face, "what do you think of the old fairy's hut?"

"It is very pretty, though it is so small," said Emily, "and you are very kind. Everybody is kind in England."

"Indeed? I have found it otherwise, Snowdrop: though kindness has not been wanting, either. But small as the hut is, there is always room for a friend; fairies take care of that, as you will find."

"Fairies are not real," said Emily, shaking her head; "they are not like spirits."

"What do you know about spirits, little maiden? You are almost a sprite yourself, appearing in people's rooms at night when they do not expect you."

"Oh, I hope not. Spirits are unkind and cruel; they hate dogs and birds. I never had a dog to pet, till I went away from home, because the spirits did not like them."

Mrs. Raymond's fingers stole along the child's wrist to feel her pulse.

"She is not feverish," she thought, "or I should fancy she was light-headed. No, her manner is too natural for any delusion. There is some strange story connected with this, and she may be easier if she tells me all."

So, carefully suppressing any signs of surprise, she encouraged her young guest to be communicative: and Emily, in her quiet, matter-of-fact style of narrative, told a great deal without intending, or knowing it. She gave her little history, as we have already traced it; but she added some details of what had gone before which deeply moved her listener. When Emily was asleep in the bed which Bennet had contrived for her in her own room, Mrs. Raymond confided to her attendant the story she had just heard; anxious to see what she thought of it. Bennet nodded her head in evident satisfaction. The boy had told just the same tale, and how he had followed to save her from her step-father's hands; and he had almost tears in his eyes when he said he would have followed them through fire and water sooner than not at all, only it would soon have been difficult, for his money was just out. "And I made bold, ma'am, knowing you would wish it, to hand him over some, that he may telegraph to his master, or the lady, the first thing in the morning," added Bennet. "I told him I did not think you would approve of the young lady going off with him by the early train, and that no doubt the lady who has charge of Miss Stormount would come and fetch her."

"You are right, Bennet, as you generally are. We shall not give up our wanderer to any but the lawful hands. By the way, what is

your opinion of this lad whom the dear child seems to trust so completely? Is he trustworthy, or not?"

"Well, ma'am, I asked that question of myself just now, and I could not help thinking that if he had not been Mr. Ernest would not have taken to him, as he seems to have done."

"Ah, Bennet, Mr. Ernest can do no wrong, and make no mistakes, in your opinion."

"Not quite that, ma'am. I have known him make mistakes, and may know him make more; but he is one that you couldn't impose on twice, and if he trusts this lad, I think I should."

Paul was commissioned to send the telegram in the morning, and went out. His breakfast waited long for his return, but waited in vain.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE TRAIL.

The shock of the sudden news—the more sudden, that there had been mention of improvement in the last accounts—that Mrs. Dangerfield was gone, and that her guardianship had begun at the moment when her charge was missing, seemed powerfully to affect Adela Granard's nerves, already sufficiently tried by recent suffering. The agony of self-reproach for carelessness, and the dread of what it might lead to, could only be allayed by hastening in pursuit; and her friends, though anxious on her own account, sympathised too much not to speed her on her way. Nothing would induce Sir Marcus Combermere to let her go without him; and a hint to his daughter made her dutifully suppress all objection. His carriage, servants, purse, and time were all at her disposal: moreover, he had a duty to perform to his little patient, who had thus been spirited away from his care. Ernest Archdale's offer to accompany them was at first peremptorily rejected; but after a private conference on the subject, Sir Marcus changed his mind, and consented that he should go, at any rate, as far as they could drive, and return in the carriage.

"I will see he does nothing foolish," he said to Mrs. Archdale, who smiled acquiescence, but did not feel at all sure that he was not promising more than he could perform. Cecilia, standing near, expressed nothing but sympathy with Miss Granard, and resentment on Emily's behalf. Sympathy was, indeed, the general sentiment. Mr. Bourne volunteered to look after the ladies in his host's absence; and forgot to be affronted because he went at all. The Archdeacon, finding Sir Marcus bent on going, said nothing about his own plans. He left them to arrange theirs while he strode home to pack his bag and get ready for the next up-train. With all this, it seemed that Emily's recovery must be a matter of course. As soon as the carriage, with Charles on the box beside the coachman, drove from the door, those left gave audible utterance to their doubts and fears.

"He has got too good a start, that Professor man; they'll never catch him," said Mr. Bourne, gloomily: "but it's no use saying so."

"Then why do you say it?" thought Kate, though she kept the angry words back, for it would not do to quarrel now her father was gone. "If I could have foreseen being left like this by papa, what should I have done?——and yet I cannot grudge him to Adela. Oh dear, how ill she looked! I wish they were all safe home again!"

Had she read her father's thoughts, she would have seen he was wishing the same thing: but, as the journey must be taken, his chief care was to make it as easy as possible for his two companions. Adela made him uneasy. He could see how strenuous were the efforts she made to keep herself calm, while her head was throbbing, and her cheeks were burning; every fibre of her frame seemed ready to quiver. To beguile the way, and divert her thoughts, if possible, he drew Archdale into conversation; and the latter, discerning the motive, talked of everything that he hoped would interest her, and succeeded, sometimes, in making her forget. It was not much that either could do in the way of kindness, but all in their power they did, and she felt it to her heart's core.

Whether his mother was right, and he was doing a foolish thing in spite of Sir Marcus's promise, is not for us to decide; but of this we may be assured, that all his sympathy, all his indignation, all his fear for the innocent cause of her anxiety, did not prevent the invalid lieutenant from a sense of enjoyment which he had not known for many a day. To sit opposite to one so lovely and interesting as Adela Granard, sharing her troubles, helping her through her difficulties, knowing himself to be of use, and a support instead of an incumbrance, was a sensation sweet enough to have warned him of its danger, had he thought of himself at all. Unselfish by nature, it was a positive relief to lay aside the invalid, and be occupied for other people. Though never a moment without pain or discomfort, he hid both with gallant endeavour; and, indeed, was scarcely sensible of either in the presence of Adela.

Sir Marcus, whose keen eye nothing escaped, encouraged him in his pretence of being free from pain; even looked as if he believed it.

"Let him alone, my dear," he said, when Ernest had insisted on alighting at an inn, to make enquiries, which Adela thought Charles could have made with less risk, "nothing is so wholesome for him, poor fellow, as fancying he is useful. I brought him as much for his own sake as ours; anything is good that gives him a motive for exertion."

Adela thought that this was holding his services rather cheap, but did not say so. He came back, shaking his head with an air of disappointment. She was beginning to thank him, when a helper in a fur cap came up to the carriage, and, with a rough kind of salute, asked, in the broad dialect of those parts, if one of the gen-

tlemen was Mr. Archdale. Yes—here he was; what news? As to news, the helper could say nothing; only he had a bit of a note here, to hand to him, and the young chap said he was to have a shilling for it.

"Penny post would be an improvement here, Archdale, wouldn't it?" said Sir Marcus, as Ernest, with evident triumph, paid the money; receiving, in return, a dirty wisp of paper, none the fresher for having been kept, for safety, in the fur cap of the messenger.

"It's all right, Sir Marcus," he replied, after puzzling over this for some minutes. "They passed this way by the coach, and he has seen the little lady, and she seems quite quiet, hugging Coco."

"Coco will be her best friend, next to Paul himself, I have a notion. Anyhow, it was a good thought of the lad's to write; it shows he is in earnest."

Adela's eyes shone with thankfulness. In fact, the whole party were relieved of a secret dread, lest terror and surprise should have brought on one of poor Emily's nervous attacks. Now that she must soon know a friend was at hand, there was every hope she would hold out till they could reach her.

Sir Marcus had Bradshaw at his fingers' ends, and was not long in discovering that it was almost impossible for them, in the state of the roads, to reach the town in time for the seven o'clock up-train; by which train he expected the Professor meant to reach London. However, he had additional horses put to the carriage, and did all in his power to achieve the impossible—so that Adela was supported by the hope of being in time till they reached the inn where the coach put up. Here, on enquiry, they learned that no gentleman and child had entered the premises. After some little delay, it was found they had driven to the Royal Hotel. Thither they went accordingly, and Ernest picked up another cypher, confirming the Baronet's opinion. The Professor had ordered a fly for the station, to catch the 7 p.m. train.

It was now long past that hour, and Sir Marcus needed but one look at his fair companion to decide him on taking prompt measures.

"We can do nothing more for an hour or two," he said, "so I see no reason why we should starve. Archdale, my good fellow, order something as soon as you can; soup, and a cutlet, and a bottle of sherry, and some tea—then we shall please all tastes; and you, Miss Granard, be so good as to sit down by the fire, and rest yourself till dinner is ready. If you can get a little nap, all the better."

He knew well enough that sleep was to her simply impossible, while her temples beat like hammers, and her feet were cold as ice. To keep her quiet was his real object, while he took Charles aside for a confidential explanation.

"Your young lady, my good fellow, is done up. She ought not to go a step further."

"I was just thinking so myself, Sir Marcus."

"She has been stunned by the suddenness of the whole thing, you see, telegram and all. She will be quite ill if she goes on."

"It's no wonder to me, Sir Marcus, begging your pardon—knowing, as I know, all she went through. I've been afraid some mischief would come of it, all along."

"We'll stop the mischief, if we can. Look here, Charles. If she can get a good long sleep, she will wake up much better. I mean her to stay here to-night and take something I shall prescribe; and the people of the house are respectable and intelligent, and will take care to obey my orders. You must remain too, to keep watch over her; and if she sleeps till the middle of to-morrow, all the better. Mr. Archdale will be at hand, and I shall telegraph to him as soon as I have any news of Miss Emily. I hope to stop them at Dover by going up to-night by the eleven train."

"You must go, then, Sir Marcus?" said Charles, ruefully. For, in his opinion, Adela was of more consequence than her ward.

"Why, you don't think your young lady would sleep much to-night, if no one went after the child, do you?——and of the four of us, I am the only one that can go. I shall give Mr. Archdale instructions what to do: and you must look after him, and see he has a good fire, for it has been rather a risk his coming at all."

Charles bowed, smiling a little to himself; for he had his own opinion as to the secret of Ernest's sudden energy. He promised the young gentleman should want nothing that he could do for him; and Sir Marcus, having settled this point, went to prepare Adela for what he knew would be a trial—the necessity of being left behind.

He waited till the meal had been served, and he had seen her futile attempts to partake of it. When the cloth was removed, and she began to look at her watch, as if she thought it was time to dress for the journey, he drew his chair by the side of hers, and took her by the hand.

"You are not going any further to-night, my dear. Everything is arranged, and I undertake it all. You are ill, and quite unable to do anything but just obey me as your doctor, and trust me as your friend."

He had prepared himself for remonstrance, but perceived that his decision was an immense relief. For the last hour Adela had been thinking of the noise of the train, and how she should ever bear it. Her powers of exertion had so completely collapsed, that sorrow and anxiety and self-reproach, the three goads which had harassed her during the tedious drive, had lost their poignancy; pain and oppression had obtained such complete mastery. She yielded without a struggle, and scarcely seemed to understand what the others were arranging. To lay her head on a pillow, and hear nothing, was all she could wish for, or think about.

And thanks to her doctor's prescription, she did at last obtain some sleep, though not of a refreshing kind. It was a night of continual

struggle with fearful dreams; in which, as was only natural, Emily bore her part, and Emily's enemies, the spirits. She woke at last, repeating in her anguish, "More with us than with them"—and found it was morning, and a civil chambermaid coming in with a welcome cup of tea. After drinking it she fell asleep again, and did not wake till so late in the day, that a shaded lamp was burning on the table, by which the shadow of a seated figure was thrown on the opposite wall. As she turned to look at it, the figure rose, and a soft, light hand was laid on her temples; such a touch as she had not felt since she lost her mother. A sweet, low voice, with an accent in it that reminded her of foreign friends, asked if she would like something to drink; and a cup was offered to her lips, pleasant and refreshing both to smell and taste. She drank, and the same voice spoke to someone else in the room, observing that she would soon feel better.

She did feel better already: and, recollecting why she was there, and what had happened before, roused herself to look at her watch, and ask if there were any news.

"Yes, my dear," said the sweet voice, "the best of news. Your child is safe, only waiting till you are well enough to see her; and an old woman has come to see that you are taken care of yourself, until you are able to take care of other people."

"Emily is here? Oh, thank God for His mercy! Did Sir Marcus find her? Is he come back?"

"Nobody found her but me; and I found her asleep on my fur cloak, like a little princess in the fairy tales. Now you are too polite to ask who I am, so I must introduce myself as Ernest's granny. You know my daughter, Mrs. Archdale, and I know you by her letters; and I owe the spirits and the conjurors a good turn for helping us to become acquainted."

There was no resisting the winning manner. Though still confused and wandering, Adela felt a strange pleasure mingle with her pain, and putting the delicate hand to her lips, endeavoured to express her thanks. She had been dreaming that she had no friends left—everyone she loved or knew was gone, and her own fault had driven them away. It was, indeed, a glad awakening to find her carelessness repaired, and another kind friend come to her help.

"But my poor child—I must see her; I have to break sad news. Has Mr. Archdale told you her history?"

"I know some of it, my dear, and it has made my old blood boil, I can tell you, as if I were five-and-twenty. But I cannot help thinking it will be safer to keep the sorrowful news till you are at home. She has been so startled and shaken, poor little thing, that she is hardly in a state to bear a blow. We will prepare her for it by degrees; and while I go down to her now, suppose you dream that Bennet is your maid, and let her do for you as she does for me?"

It would be worth while to dream oftener, if dreams in general had

the comfortable reality about them which Bennet's presence implied. The luxury of such an attendant was one that Adela Granard had not enjoyed for many a long day; if, indeed, she had ever met with one so deft of hand, and so clever in perceiving just what to do and what to leave undone. While assisting the young lady to dress, she quietly told her all she wanted to know; how Miss Stormount had been discovered at Mrs. Donne's, and how the page, Paul, had set off in the morning to telègraph of her safety, and had not been seen since. How Mr. Ernest (as she always called him) found out where she was, Bennet was not quite clear. It was explained to Adela afterwards.

The story of the gentleman and the child, and all the questions asked about them, had, of course, spread through the town; and, perhaps, a rumour may have been afloat that any news about them would be rewarded. At any rate, Ernest received a visit in the morning from the driver of the fly that conveyed the Professor to the station, avowedly to restore a handkerchief that the young lady had dropped, but with the purpose also of informing him that the fare had not gone by the seven up-train at all; he had driven them to the Midland, "t'other side of the town." As this was important information, it met with due reward, and after consulting Charles, the young officer decided to follow the indicated route. He caught a train that changed for London where the evening one had done, and on making enquiry there, heard a strange tale—how a gentleman had met with an accident, and got separated from his daughter, and went on, thinking she was in another carriage; but finding she had been left behind, had telegraphed that she was to wait for his return. The gentleman had come back that morning to fetch her, but no one knew where she was, nor had she been seen since the night before, and the poor father was in a terrible taking. It was supposed he had gone to a magistrate's, to get help from the police.

Finding no message from Paul, and having time to spare, Ernest took the opportunity of surprising his grandmother with a visit, little expecting the surprise that awaited him at her house. Bennet did not think it necessary to explain how strongly her mistress's feelings were wrought upon by the glowing description the young gentleman gave of Miss Stormount's guardian—but Mrs. Raymond had decided to bring the child back to Miss Granard herself, rather than send her alone with Mr. Archdale; and it was evident, by her own showing, that Bennet had been charmed to have to pack and arrange against time, and to find plenty to do for them all as soon as she arrived. At the risk of making mortal enemies in the Royal Hotel, she had tidied the rooms, and re-modelled the fires, and prepared all sorts of things over a spirit lamp, which she refused to trust to any of the kitchen officials; and only regretted that she could not see personally to the cooking of the dinner, as she was sure nobody knew exactly what her mistress liked but herself.

Adela was scarcely dressed, when Emily came to her door, petitioning for admission; and directly she saw her, the young guardian felt Mrs. Raymond's advice was judicious. Folding her arms round the child, and feeling how her slight frame quivered with agitation, she silently vowed that come what might, if only power were given, her first duty on earth would be to that persecuted orphan. To make her happy, to bring her up in the fear of God, to teach her the right use of the means put into her hands, to deliver her brain and nerves from the terrors which had been so cruelly excited—this, with Heaven's help, should be the work of her life, so long as it was needed; and as she pressed her lips on Emily's forehead to seal the vow, her tears dropped on her face.

"Are you crying?" asked Emily, anxiously. "Do you think mamma will be sorry I did not go?"

"No, dear; it was her wish that you should be with me."

"Will he be unkind to her about it?"

"Our Father in Heaven will take care of her, Emily. He keeps watch over her, as He does over us. We have only to trust Him, and nothing can make us afraid."

It was the simple truth she had from the first endeavoured to stamp on the excited brain, and which had already proved so efficacious. Emily was silent for some minutes, revolving some point in her mind, which at last found utterance in a question. "Will He take care of Paul, too?"

"If Paul trusts in Him, we know He will."

"But Paul says he knows nothing about it; that no one ever taught him. And now he is lost, too, and nobody is going to look for him."

"Yes, indeed, my Snowdrop," said Mrs. Raymond, who had followed her, "we all mean to look for Paul; and if he has never been taught that his Father knows how to take care of him, he will learn it. I am an old woman now, my dear, but I was much younger than either Paul or you when I knew what it was to have no home, and to lose what seemed to be my only friend."

"Oh, tell me all about it—tell me your story!" said Emily, eagerly. But the old lady shook her head.

"Some day, when Miss Granard brings you to pay me a visit, as I hope she will, you shall hear my adventures, as far as they will interest you. And meanwhile, do not forget that you have seen an instance of the wonderful way in which our Father takes care of us—for here I am to tell the tale, and your troubles are nothing to mine."

She had done good service by saying this, for it took Emily completely out of herself: and, her imagination being set to work, she thought of little else all the evening but what Mrs. Raymond's adventures could have been; hoping that the talked-of visit would be paid before very long.

There was another whose eyes brightened when such a scheme was

lked of. Ernest had always been his grandmother's favourite, and to her indulgence he would sometimes confide matters that he shrank from discussing with his mother. She knew all about Cairngorm, and Miss Wilmot, and was now only waiting for him to begin, to throw herself heartily into the whole concern. But finding him silent, she took the opportunity, when they were alone for a few minutes, to ask how his affairs were progressing.

"I hear you met accidentally—is there anything for me to hear?"

He looked up with a smile. "Accidentally, indeed. That snow-drift was a blessed invention. Is she not lovely, granny?"

The old lady raised her eyebrows; she knew now where she was.

"It is no longer Rosalind, then, my gentle Montague? I never saw the other, but I cannot wonder if you admire so fair a creature as this. How long have you known her?"

"If we measure by time, granny, I am afraid it will seem a little while; but I feel as if I had known her half my life. At least, as if the rest were of very little account."

"Has it gone so far as this, my poor boy? And what does *she* feel, or think?"

"Dear granny, how should I know? I have said and done nothing to raise the question. How can I? You see what I am; and in how unfit a state to win anyone ——"

"You have yet to learn that we women are sometimes as much won by weakness and suffering, as by gallantry and strength?"

"Oh, I know you are ministering angels—none better; but a man must feel he has something to offer besides his own discomforts; and I have very little more. Granny, what will you say to my leaving the army for a house of business?"

She was shocked; he saw that. But she would not grieve him.

"Does your mother approve, my child?" she said with a sigh.

"Dear mother winces, as you do; but necessity admits no sentiment. I must leave my sword with you till I can claim it again, like the old marquis you used to make me read about."

"And there is no other course for you? Nothing but a desk and a ledger?"

"Nothing; unless I could find the lost dowry, granny." He said this to make her smile; but the hand that was stroking his hair, stopped short, and pressed his head with sudden vehemence.

"Ernest, that dream returned to me last night! Often as you have laughed at the old woman's story, the day will yet come—I feel it—when you will acknowledge it was all true. Oh, how I have prayed that I might see it before I die! But if I never do, you will. All will be yours, all—to win Juliet, or Rosalind, whichsoever of them may then be the ascendant star."

"You dearest of women! you would give away all that you have, as well as all you dream about. I will be bound you saw the dowry in a silver casket, or steel-clamped box, brimming over with gold

pieces and pearls, and you said to yourself, 'Now this time I know I am awake,' and then you awoke, and, behold, it was a dream."

"As others have done before me," said Mrs. Raymond, passing from the subject. It agitated her more than her grandson supposed.

Sir Marcus was expected to return by a late train, and Bennet tried very hard to make everybody go to bed, and leave her and Charles (whom she admitted to have some common sense) to see that all was comfortable for him. But as Ernest persisted in sitting up, she could only expend her goodwill upon the young ladies and Coco, whose affections would have been in danger had he been a man, instead of a dog. The gentle attentions of the old lady, to whom she was now a peculiar object of interest, were no less soothing to Adela; and she was conscious of an exquisite pleasure in seeing that she found favour in the eyes of one so dear to Ernest. With his mother, she had felt constraint and doubt; but Emily's fairy hostess had a face and manner that could not deceive; and the magic of her caressing touch seemed for the moment to lull that gnawing at the heart, which only the orphan knows. The kind old lady could not sleep till she had seen both wanderers in bed, and exacted a renewal of the promise that they would come and see her some day, and hear the old woman's story.

"And if, when you do, you can find me a conjuror who can solve my riddle, all I can say is, I shall be happy to believe in him."

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNKNOWN CORRESPONDENTS.

Sir Marcus was back. The last day of the holidays had come; and Kate Combermere went about her household duties with a cloud on her spirits, as meekly as if she were going to school herself—as perhaps she was. The last two days, since the other guests had departed, had been so happy in the enjoyment of Lewis's companionship, so free from cares and interruptions, that it was all the harder to face the morrow's blank, and think how long it would be till Easter. Lewis himself was more silent than usual, and lounged in and out of the deserted rooms, with his hands in his pockets, as if he could settle nowhere. At last he could bear it no longer, and summoned Kate to come out for a walk, "while it was fine."

It had rained all night, and was not exactly fine then; the mists were lying low in the valleys, and the country looked, as Lewis disrespectfully remarked, like Dickens's benevolent patriarch, after his hair was cut short. But Kate would have done anything to please him; and Dandie, who had been much discomfited by symptoms of packing, to which he had a strong aversion, woke up from a dissatisfied slumber into somewhat obtrusive activity, and seconded the motion with a round of applause. Umbrellas and proof-armour being hastily assumed, the friends started for their last walk, choosing

the high road because they had no choice—it was the only one passable.

"Well, Kate," was Lewis's first remark, when they had gone some little way in silence, "if all your visitors were as sorry to go as I am, you are in for a voluminous correspondence. I have been studying my letter of thanks half the morning; and, as Mr. Collins would say, you may expect it in a day or two."

"So long as you do write, I'll forgive you the thanks. I had quite enough with good Mrs. Bourne's."

"Dear kind soul! One had need to be thoroughly sweet-tempered to live with her."

'One had need to be sweet-tempered anywhere, but one isn't: judging by those around her."

"Oh, I do not defend old Bourne. I have been wondering how he and Archdale will hit it off, when it comes to a difference of opinion."

"It would be difficult to quarrel with Ernest."

"So difficult, that I have given it up: though I have been within an ace of trying."

"Why, what has he done?"

"Done? That is the very thing. Where any man in his senses would do a great deal, he does nothing. I never saw a fellow so blind to his own opportunities."

"He has not been fit to work before, remember. I think the move he has made is very much to his credit, for I am sure it went against him, poor fellow."

"Oh, you pity him, do you? Well, it may be a nuisance to work under old Bourne, but there might be compensation there, if he chose to have it."

"It will be compensation, if he adds to his mother's income."

"You mercenary being, is that all you think of? Can anybody, gifted with the eyesight of an owl in the daytime, help seeing, when those two are together, what one of them is throwing away?"

"He and his mother, do you mean?" asked Kate, knowing perfectly well that he meant nothing of the kind.

"His mother? nonsense. I mean that poor, sweet girl who evidently worships him: and whom, as far as I can see, he does not treat as she deserves?"

"Perhaps I am short-sighted, but as far as I can see, I really think he does. You have taken the lead in gossiping about our neighbours, recollect. What a state this road is in!"

"It is not gossip, it is plain fact," said Lewis, striding ancle deep through water, without being the least aware of it. "He has won her regard, no matter whether he meant it or not; and now he chooses to be coldly civil, and hug his own offended dignity on account of some thoughtlessness on her part, such as any pretty girl might be guilty of, under circumstances. I suppose he never knew the facts; and

it is just one of those cases where people may be miserable all their lives, just for want of an explanation."

"But what is to hinder an explanation, if there can be one?"

"Just put yourself in her place, Kate. Not as you actually are, always sensible and right-judging ——"

"I would curtsey, sir, but for the puddles," interrupted Kate.

"But as she was then; ignorant of the world, flattered, and carried away with high spirits and novelty. She does a thing she is sorry for—it was not a crime, when all is said and done—but of course it was not pleasant for him to hear she had been seen in his rival's four-in-hand, while he was laid up with his fall. Now, if he knew the whole story—how unhappy she was all the time, though she did not know how much he was hurt—how she had to hide her misery from the curious eyes round her, for fear of their remarks, and was ashamed to stand out, because she felt it all so much—if he knew all this, which it is impossible for her to tell him, do you suppose it would not all come right between them directly? He must be much more stiff-necked than I think him, if he stood on his dignity afterwards."

"How came you to know all this, Lewis?"

"Now then, what are the gossips going to say about that? She is one of those innocent, open-hearted creatures that expand to kindness as flowers to the sun; and when I was clumsy enough to say that I understood and was sorry for her, instead of being affronted, as some girls would have been, and spiting me for my awkwardness, she took me into her confidence in the most engaging way—and when she had relieved her heart, I could only offer to help her, if possible. I declare, she looked upon me at the time as she might look upon the Archdeacon: whom, by the way, she does not at all admire. Was there any harm in all that?"

"None in the world. Are you not betraying her confidence by telling me?"

"I should be, if I had not assured her that you would be her best adviser. She said she only wished you knew all, but she was a little afraid of you."

Miss Combermere only smiled. She asked how he proposed to be of any use in so delicate a matter.

"Well, I tried it on with Archdale before he went; but he was so taken up with his journeys, and his change of professions, and the mystery of his Goblin Page, in whom I simply do not believe, that there was no making him attend. Perhaps he guessed what I wanted, and (very naturally) wished me to mind my own business. However, I have not done with him. He will have to settle in London, and I shall get an exeat, like the boys, and run up some Saturday till Monday."

"I thought you never liked to do that," said Kate, rather dismayed by the suggestion.

"I do not, as a rule. When I mentioned it, Miss Wilmot brightened up so much, I could not be so ungracious as not say I would call at Mr. Bourne's. She reminded me of it as she said good-bye."

"Her spirits did not seem to require much cheering. Perhaps it was all your doing that she laughed and chattered the whole evening."

"You do not know how low she was that day the child was stolen, and we were all in an uproar. Archdale, it seems, hardly noticed her at all, though he knew how she had been frightened; and went off in the carriage without a word or a look to comfort her. So I proposed starting for a good walk among the hills; we had talked of it before, and it did her all the good in the world. You saw how much better she was: and so I repeated the remedy every day."

Kate had seen, indeed, that Cecilia made a point of showing indifference about Ernest, both during his absence and after his return; her pleasant looks and attentive ears being reserved for Lewis. She felt perplexed, and saddened, but durst not ask herself why.

"Tell me what you think, Kate," he went on, after a pause. "Surely one ought not to see so sweet a life made wretched for want of a few friendly words?"

"If I thought a few friendly words would make them both happy, I should be as ready to speak them as you are; but, my dear fellow-gossip (you began it, remember), before you let your benevolence run away with you, had you not better be certain that it is not too late? Are you sure our friend Ernest has any heart left to give?"

"If he has not—but I don't believe it. I know of whom you are thinking: but it no more follows from his being ready to help her about the child, than from my fishing her out of the snow. I only wonder your gossiping propensity has not fastened upon me!"

His laugh did her good; for, at any rate, there was no consciousness in it, and she was wise enough not to make any attempt at warning him of danger. The conversation turned on other subjects, and she tried to forget her uneasiness: or, at least, to think it unfounded.

Breakfast, taken early the next morning, was over when the letters arrived. Lewis Frankland's eyes at once detected a delicate handwriting he had learned to distinguish, among a pile that fell to Kate's share. Sir Marcus took his from the room.

"Mr. Collins has kept his word, I am sure," he said. "There must be a letter of thanks among all these. Do let me hear one."

She had intended reserving them till he was gone, as only one precious quarter of an hour remained; but, yielding to his wish, she opened Miss Wilmot's, and read it aloud.

"My Dear Miss Combermere,—I cannot allow anyone else to speak for me, not even Mrs. Bourne, who can speak so well for everybody; and though she will have told you all that is worth

your knowing, I must steal a few minutes of that time which is so largely drawn upon, to assure you I shall never forget all the kindness shown to me in your delightful house. I shall often and often long to be back again in the warm, bright rooms, watching the snow, and hearing the wind, remembering how equal your resources were to every emergency, and that, the rougher matters looked with out, the smoother they would be within. Our journey was painfully devoid of incident; Miss Medlicott was nearly left behind at the refreshment station; and Mr. Bourne, for full twenty minutes, believed he had lost the tickets; both proving false alarms. There was no snowdrift to stop us at hospitable gates, and no gallant deliverer to dig us out if there had been. I am afraid Mr. Frankland will have a great deal to answer for, as I have become slightly insane on the subject of hills, and have invested in a map of London that I may know where to find them. At present I am divided between the Holborn and Notting ranges, as a preparation for the Alpine heights of Primrose and Hampstead. Any hints about guides, outfit, and distances, will be gratefully acknowledged."

"That is all meant for you, Lewis, so you will have to answer it. The rest is a pretty little speech for my father; but he must read it afterwards, or you will miss your train."

"Give it to me; I will read it to him on the way," said Lewis, "it will amuse me through my dull journey. You shall have it again, if you want it."

And, true to his word, he returned it in a couple of days, with a facetious parody of an Alpine Club paper, describing an imaginary ascent of Holborn Hill, with full instructions to the uninitiated, which Kate laughed over first, and about which she very nearly cried when she forwarded it to Cecilia Wilmot.

"Well, my love," said Sir Marcus, thinking how quiet the house was after their large party, "you managed to keep them from quarrelling, you see, after all."

She smiled, because he was watching her; and said he was always right, and she should never be anxious on that score again.

"But oh!" she thought, when she could do so freely, "they might all have quarrelled and welcome, sooner than it should have come to this."

Her best resource at this time was her intercourse with Keith's lodgings, to which Miss Granard had got back. Between her own and Emily's affairs, Adela had more business letters to read and write than she could well have got through, without the help of Comber Court. Sir Marcus was always at her service, and the most difficult parts of the correspondence were generally accomplished in his study; while it became so natural for Kate to make her friend's dwelling the object of her constitutional walk, that Dandie was aggrieved when she attempted to go anywhere else.

The interest of Dandie's visits, the little bustle that ensued of

persuading Coco to go into retirement, that his feelings might not be lacerated by seeing his little mistress devote herself to another—the delight of being entreated for biscuit with all the eloquence of begging paw and wooing tail—were of more value to Emily than Dandie knew. Her state was far from satisfactory, though Sir Marcus was hopeful for the future, and encouraged patience and ingenuity in working out the cure. She had borne the revelation of her mother's death better than was expected, receiving with docility all the consolations her friends could suggest, and obeying every word or look of Adela's, with an eagerness that showed how she dwelt upon the last injunction she had heard from that mother's lips. But her nights were sometimes terrible. Many an hour did her guardian hear the church clock strike, while she sat by the poor child's bed, holding her hand as she lay awake, or watching for one of those starts from harrowing dreams, which were worse than sleeplessness. Adela's beauty began to look a little worn.

"You will have to keep a nurse and a secretary, if this goes on," said Miss Combermere, when she found her friend, after one of these vigils, sitting with her head on her hand, and a pile of letters at her elbow. "I asked Charles if you were very busy, and he looked 'volumes,' as the people say—binding, advertisements, and all; and no wonder. Where is Emily?"

"The Archdeacon has taken her out for a walk. He only returned yesterday, and I have had a lecture already about exercise and occupation."

"I feel more inclined to lecture upon rest and recreation. What is the last worry? You were brooding over one when I came in?"

"I was thinking about Paul Rocket; wishing we could hear something of him. His disappearance has begun to distress Emily strangely. Instead of those dreams about her poor mother calling for help, she is haunted now by visions of Paul's being persecuted by the spirits, and prevented from coming back. You look as if you had something to tell."

"I have only this anonymous letter Ernest Archdale has sent us; a proof, in itself, that we are all pretty strictly watched. Like all such documents, the handwriting is detestable. There it is for you."

The letter was enclosed in an envelope, addressed to Sir Marcus, in a bold, manly hand, on which Adela's eye dwelt with interest. "Oh!" said Kate, good-humouredly, "I did not mean Mr. Archdale's writing; you will find his correspondent's much less pleasant to decipher."

It was, indeed, an ill-spelt, ill-worded scrawl, to the effect that no further trouble need be taken about Paul Rocket, as he had deserved so well of his employers in his recent mission, that they had promoted him to a better situation, and higher wages. The faults of spelling, like the irregular characters, were evidently assumed; the signature

was with difficulty made out to be "One who knows;" and there was no date, or address. The postmark was London.

"My father thinks," said Kate, "that this is as likely as not to be only a blind, intended to set us against the lad. But it makes one anxious on his account, poor fellow. What makes you look so hard at the writing?"

"I want to compare it with another anonymous letter, which I received this morning," replied Adela.

"Another! This looks like a deliberate plan of annoyance."

"It means more than that, I am afraid," sighed Miss Granard. "Listen:—

"'The guardian of Miss Emily Stormount is recommended to be careful how she enters into the responsibilities of a property on which there may be serious claims. Circumstances known only to the present writer, but deserving earnest consideration, might make Miss Granard's position anything but desirable. Should further elucidation be desired, a letter, containing five shillings for expenses, may be addressed to X. L., care of Messrs. Stubbs, Chemists, Holborn."'

"Humph!" said Kate, "I can understand that better. It is worth while to worry people, if they will send you five shillings in return."

"Now then, look at this from my old friend Miss Joseph. And, putting the three together, tell me if there is not some connection between them?"

Miss Joseph had already written several times, giving the mournful details that she knew would be valued; but it was the first time she had mentioned her own proceedings. "You see by my address, dear Adela, that I am lodging at the Museum, having at last come to terms with Dr. Thaddeus, who wanted to have everything his own way, and put me on the same floor with the snakes and lizards. I have a decent bedroom at the top of the house, quite out of their reach; and here my headquarters will be for the present, to which I can return after any necessary journeys. You are very good to invite me, and I shall look forward to such a visit as a reward; but I have work to do first. It is time you knew that Mrs. Dangerfield gave me the key of her desk, telling me it contained a packet of papers, which were to be delivered to you after her death; and that when I opened the desk as she desired, no such packet was there. My own opinion is that the key was taken from me during my sleep from the effects of an opiate, and the papers extracted; but I am unable to say by whom, though I have strong suspicions. At any rate, I failed at my post, and cannot look you in the face till I have retrieved my error."

"This throws some light on your anonymous correspondent, certainly," said Miss Combermere. "Stay, here is a postscript, which will perhaps tell us more.

"'The doctor asks if Emily will find him some creatures, whose names he has written down, which are to be found at the English Lakes. I hope they are harmless."

"Dear me," commented Kate, "I hope so too. Have you any idea what they are?"

"Only caterpillars of one or two moths. The Archdeacon and Emily hunted them up out of one of his books, and at the proper season will supply the demand. It is evidently meant as a prescription for her mind; and by what I have seen of the doctor, we may be glad to compound for nothing worse."

"Defend me from such remedies," said Kate: "and let me advise you, in strict confidence, not to allow the Archdeacon to do what he pleases with your rooms. He will make a museum of them, if you don't take care. Ah, Emily!" as the object of their solicitude came in at that moment, her cheeks tinted with the fresh air and exercise, and her eyes bright with animation, "you will soon know the country here, and all that is in it, much better than I do."

"Eyes and no eyes, Miss Kate," said the Archdeacon, who followed his young companion, and began deliberately to empty his capacious pockets of all the specimens, animal, mineral, and vegetable, with which he had been illustrating his peripatetic instructions. The civil dismay in Miss Granard's face, as she endeavoured to rescue her books and portfolio from the unwelcome miscellany, without hurting his feelings, or damping Emily's pleasure, amused Kate. It behoved her to strike in to the rescue.

"I cannot help thinking, Emily," she said, "that Dr. Thaddeus would like us to get up a collection of our own, from which we could supply him as he requires. Suppose you ask Mrs. Keith if she can spare that little room where the sewing machine is, and get Charles to fit it up with shelves and cases?"

The suggestion was hailed with applause; and while the child ran to coax Mrs. Keith, who could refuse her nothing, the young ladies made the Archdeacon sit down, and read the letters. He did so, making no comment till he had finished. "What is young Archdale about in London?" he asked abruptly.

"He has just begun work in Mr. Bourne's counting-house," explained Kate. "He is to learn his duties for the first month without salary, and then begin on a moderate one, to be raised according to his merits."

"Give me his address."

Kate wrote down the number and street of the lodgings, where the mother and son generally resided, when in town.

"I don't think it will do to ignore these facts," was his remark, as he made a few notes in his pocket-book, "and somebody had better look up the party at Stubbs the chemists', and see if it be something more than a swindle. About that boy a serious question arises. You remember his saying, when the child was frightened at

the Court, that there must be a confederate in the house, and the sooner she was out of it, the better?"

They remembered it well; and neither liked to own how uneasy it had made them.

"Well, if 'One who knows' speaks the truth, we may decide at once that it was all a trick to get Emily out of those quarters, whence it would not have been so easy to carry her off."

"That I cannot believe," said Adela.

"I do not say I believe it myself; but if Paul has been maligned in the matter, he deserves a handsomer recompense than to be left to his fate. And I, for one, am not satisfied to do so. I should like to see him well horsewhipped, or well pensioned, according to his deserts."

"I would give a great deal to be sure of his safety, if only on Emily's account," said Adela: and she proceeded to describe the child's sufferings at night, in words that set the Archdeacon striding up and down the room in excitement. Emily's return to the room stopped what he was going to say, and caused him to calm his impatience.

"Don't you think it would be a very good plan to ask Dr. Thaddeus about the museum upstairs, Emily, and get him to tell us exactly how the cases should be made, and so forth?"

Emily thought it would be an excellent plan. "Then make all your preparations as fast as you can, and when I come back we will begin in real earnest," said the Archdeacon.

"Where are you going, then?" asked Emily, in a tone of dissappointment, while the young ladies looked at him in surprise.

"I am going over to Ostend, to consult Dr. Thaddeus."

(*To be continued.*)

A LEGACY OF GRATITUDE.

By the Author of "In the Dead of Night."

CHAPTER III.

LUIGI CORONI.

BETWEEN four and five years passed away. During that time Coroni was shot in a skirmish, and died of the wound: poor Marietta survived him only three months. The intelligence reached me in this manner:

A little business had taken me one day into one of the lower neighbourhoods in the East-end of London, when a hand was laid timidly on my arm and I was accosted in Italian. I turned at the once familiar sounds, and beheld before me a bundle of rags with a man inside them. "Ah, signor, do you not remember poor Pinelli?"

It was Pinelli, indeed, but so changed that I hardly recognized him. In a few words he told me that both Coroni and his wife were dead, that the band was utterly broken up, that he, Pinelli, had been obliged to fly for his life, and after various adventures and wanderings had found himself in cold, gloomy London. "But I have brought Luigi with me," he added. "You remember the little one, signor? I could not leave him behind, the child of my captain and of my cousin. No, no! Pinelli could not leave the orphan to fall into the hands of those bloodhounds. May they die accursed and never see the gates of Paradise!"

"Luigi in London!" I said.

"Si, signor. You see I had heard a great deal about London, and I thought that if we could once get here everything would go well with us—that the rich English would give me plenty of money for playing in front of their houses, and that I should be able to keep Luigi as his father's son ought to be kept. Ah, what a mistake! All day long and half the night I used to trudge through the bitter streets, and when I had done, after paying the hire of the strumento, there was often hardly enough left to buy the boy's supper and my own. Luigi often begged me to send him out with some white mice, but you see, signor, I wanted to keep him like a little gentleman, if I could only do so. However, I agreed that he should go out on sunny afternoons among the lords and pretty ladies, and see if he could bring home a few lire to help pay for our room, when all at once the child fell ill. There was no one to nurse him but myself, and he grew so much worse in a day or two that I could not leave him. We should have starved, signor, in our little room but for some kind friends, who were, however, almost as poor as ourselves. Well, the

boy began to mend a little by-and-by, and in a day or two more I thought that I should be able to go out again and earn some money; but one morning I began to shiver from head to foot, and then I went all of a burning heat, and I knew that I had got the ague. That was a month ago, signor, and I am but just beginning to crawl about again. How I and the boy have lived through it all, the saints alone could tell."

"Well, Pinelli, I am very sorry to hear such a bad account from you," I said. "I should like to see Luigi again. I suppose you do not lodge very far from here?"

"But a very little way, signor. The boy will go wild to see you again. He spoke your name in his sleep the other night, so that you must be often in his thoughts."

"But I left my address with him. Why did you not write to me, or send me some kind of a message?"

"The paper left by the signor was in our luggage, which was stolen from us one night at a little inn where we were staying, and neither Luigi nor I could remember the strange English words, or understand the meaning of them."

A walk of five minutes through a rookery of low streets, and then Pinelli stopped in front of a house, each floor of which, and, in many cases, each room of which, was occupied by a separate family. The portion of this terrible den which the two Italians called their own was a small, semi-dark, mildewed, underground back-kitchen. Seeing my very natural hesitation to enter this wretched hole, Pinelli called out, "Luigi, where art thou? There is some one to see thee."

Forthwith there emerged from the foul-smelling gloom a tall, thin, cadaverous-faced boy, with bright, hectic-looking eyes and long dark elf-locks falling over his shoulders. He was clad in rags that would scarcely hold together, and in one thin, wasted hand he clutched a hard dry crust, at which he had evidently been gnawing a moment previously. He blinked at me suspiciously for a moment or two, the daylight being too strong for his eyes: then all at once a look of recognition flashed across his face.

"Il Signor Dottore!" he cried, as he dropped his crust and sprang forward as though he would have thrown himself into my arms, as he used to do in the old days among the hills. But even in the next moment he shrank away, and staggering with a low cry against the door-post, he sank to the ground, hid his face in his hands, and began to cry as though his heart would break. A sense of his rags, his dirt, and his wretched surroundings had smitten him suddenly. He remembered where and how he had seen me last, and the contrast was too much for him.

What relief is there to the overwrought heart like the rush of long pent-up tears? I soothed the boy as well as I knew how, and after a few minutes he could listen calmly to what I had to say. He was fearfully emaciated. The vitality of his young life seemed thoroughly

sapped. I was afraid that consumption had already set its mark upon him. It was needful to get him away from that noisome den as soon as possible.

Pinelli was at once sent out to purchase certain necessaries, and I waited with the boy till he came back. Coals and wood were the first articles to arrive, and in a few minutes Luigi and I had a merry fire roaring up the little chimney. How the lad cowered over the blaze, how he gloated over the unwonted warmth, turning himself round and round as though he could never have enough of it! Presently Pinelli returned with some tins of soup, some bread, and a little wine, together with sundry other articles. I did not go till the hot soup was ready to put on the table, and then it was with a promise to see them again on the morrow.

See them again on the morrow I did. The first thing to be done was to get them away from that horrible den, the next was to drive them to a ready-made clothier's, where they could exchange their rags for some decent attire. Then we drove to the nearest public bath, and when, at the end of an hour, Pinelli and the boy emerged from it, I hardly knew them, and was no longer ashamed of being seen in their company. For the time being I located them in the house of a gardener who had formerly been in my father's service, but who was now living in one of the northern suburbs of London. There they remained for a little while till I could make some further arrangements, all they had to do in the meantime being to grow strong and well as quickly as possible.

Pinelli's hardy constitution soon recovered itself, and in less than a fortnight he was ready and anxious to be earning money again. He professed himself as being glad and willing to attempt any kind of work that I might choose to put him to, but I was not long in finding out in which direction his inclination lay. The result was that I bought him a brand-new organ, built on an improved principle, and set him up in business on his own account. I never in my life saw a man more proud than Pinelli was the first morning he started out with his new instrument. Had he been blessed with a wife, I am sure he would not have prized her half so much as he prized his organ.

The question now was what to do with Luigi. At this time he was a tall, thin, handsome boy of twelve, with a certain air of distinction which sat easily and naturally upon him. One thing seemed to me very certain: he must be sent to school. He was entirely ignorant on nearly every subject that an ordinary British schoolboy knows by heart, while, on the other hand, owing to the strange life he had led ever since he had left his mother's arms, he had picked up a mass of information and experience very much of which would have been far better unlearned. It would never have done to let him go out with Pinelli on his daily rounds, as his vagrant instincts would have prompted him to do. No: to school he must go. But for all that, I greatly doubted whether Luigi, with his wandering proclivities,

his untamed habits, and his volatile temperament, was the kind of boy likely to settle down quietly into the groove of the ordinary English schoolboy. Still, it was undoubtedly necessary that discipline of some sort should be brought to bear upon him.

In this quandary I bethought me of Lascelles, one of my old college chums. Lascelles, I knew, was now married, and added to his slender income by receiving a few boarders to educate for the public schools. Why should he not try his hand on Luigi? I wrote to him, telling him as much about the boy's antecedents as I deemed necessary. "Send the boy by all means," was the reply by return of post. "I have some reputation as a disciplinarian. I will make a special study of your protégé. My wife, who has great powers of persuasion, shall give him his first elementary lessons and lay a ground-work, and I will do what I can to develop the latent moral forces of his disposition."

Nothing could be better, I thought. The only difficulty was to persuade Luigi into seeing the case in the right light, which for a long time he declined to do. The thought of being sent away to live among strangers, where he would never see either Pinelli's face or mine, was one to which he could not reconcile himself. It was only at last by appealing to the memory of his dead mother, and impressing upon him what she would have liked him to do, and by Pinelli telling him that he would never grow up to be an English gentleman —Luigi's greatest ambition—unless he went to an English school, that he finally consented to go. Perhaps the new clothes, and the pretty boots, and the fine white shirts which he would wear if he went to school, were not without their influence on his decision; for Luigi was as fond of finery as a girl.

In any case, he went, and I congratulated myself on having worked out a knotty problem satisfactorily. I had one or two notes from Lascelles giving me encouraging accounts of his new pupil's progress. "Coroni has one of the quickest intellects for a boy that I ever met with," he wrote. "If his powers of application only equalled his abilities, he would by-and-by carry away the highest prizes in the school. But we must not expect too much at once."

Luigi had been at school a little more than three months when I received a note from Lascelles which filled me with consternation. It appeared that one of the other pupils, Edward Stratton, and Luigi had had some words in the playground about a disputed question of top-spinning. Stratton, losing his temper, had called Luigi an organ-grinding Italian; Luigi had retorted by calling Stratton's father a pork-butcher. (It would appear that that worthy individual was in the wholesale provision line.) This being more than the English boy could stand, he had thereupon landed a blow straight from his shoulder in Luigi's face, which was immediately smothered with blood. With a cry like that of a wild animal—so the other boys said—Luigi at once sprang upon his assailant, and, drawing at the same time from

some hidden pocket a knife, which no one suspected him of carrying, he aimed a blow straight at the English boy. Fortunately the other boys were too quick for him. They rushed upon him and disarmed him, but not till Stratton had received an ugly gash across his knuckles in his efforts to defend himself. For a moment all were busy asking Stratton where he was wounded, and when they turned to look for Luigi he had disappeared, nor had all their efforts to find him since been successful. The house, the grounds, and the outbuildings had all been thoroughly searched, but no trace of him could be found. Parties of labourers from the neighbouring farms were still engaged in beating the country for several miles round, at the time Lascelles' note was despatched. There was no water anywhere near the school, in which he could have drowned himself.

Such was the comforting news which greeted me, and when I read it I mentally wished young Coroni back among his native hills. I at once telegraphed to Lascelles to spare no expense in his efforts to trace the boy. Three mornings later I received a note, telling me that Luigi was not yet found, that nothing further could be done, and that the matter was now left in the hands of the police.

Two evenings later, as I was crossing the lawn on my way to the post, a figure suddenly emerged from among the clumps of evergreens, and sank to the ground close at my feet. The night was dark, and for the moment I was startled, but the one word, "Signor," uttered in an accent of piteous entreaty, told me next instant who was before me. Taking the boy by the wrist, I led him back without a word to the lighted drawing-room. A wretched object met my gaze.

Hollow-eyed and hollow-cheeked, his hair matted with sweat and dust, his clothes torn and bespattered with mud, and with the soles of his thin boots completely worn away, Luigi Coroni stood before me. He had walked from the farthest border of Essex to London, begging a crust of bread or a drink of milk here and there, where he thought he could do so without danger, sleeping under a hedge or the lee of a hay-stack by day, and trudging wearily forward mile after mile as soon as darkness set in. All this I learned later on, but just then I spoke no word to him nor he to me.

I rang the bell. "Take this boy and give him something to eat, and a bath, and then let me see him again," I said to the servant.

I at once posted a note to Lascelles, telling him that the lost one was found, and instructing him to stop any further search by the police. By return, I received a small parcel, which, on being opened, proved to contain the knife, of which Luigi had nearly made such terrible use. With it was enclosed a note from Lascelles, in which my friend stated that, after what had happened, it was of course out of the question for him to take Coroni back, and he further counselled me to get rid of my protégé as speedily as possible, otherwise there was no knowing in what terrible scrape he might some day land me. At the foot was a postscript by Mrs. Lascelles: "It will be a

great mercy if Luigi Coroni does not end his career at the gallows." I flung the letter into the fire, in a fume.

Long before this I had talked with the boy. Not that he had much to say for himself. "He struck me, and that made me see fire, and I don't know what happened after that," was all that I could get out of him. The mischief of it was that I could not be sure that Luigi felt himself to be in the wrong; indeed, I was almost sure that he felt himself to be in the right: and that, let me argue with him as I might, and try to prove to him the heinousness of his offence, should a similar contingency ever arise in future, he would act in precisely the same way. Let him but feel himself grossly insulted, or let his hot Italian blood once be thoroughly fired, and it seemed as natural to Luigi Coroni to settle his quarrel with the assistance of a knife as it would to an English boy to make the best use of his fists. In Luigi's eyes it was morally the right thing to do that you should try to stab your enemy. It was an instinct, so deeply implanted in his nature, that I despaired of ever being able to eradicate it.

I did not fail to let him see how deeply I was grieved and annoyed by what he had done. I let him come and go almost without noticing him. When I had occasion to speak to him, I did so in a sharp curt way, very different from the tone I had always adopted towards him previously. Sometimes this treatment made him sulky and defiant, but more frequently he moped about the house, wandering from room to room, curling himself up in out-of-the-way corners, restless and unhappy; or following me about with beseeching eyes, that seemed to say, "Will you never speak a kind word to me again?"

Luigi had been back nearly a week, when one evening, about eleven o'clock, I strolled down the lane to smoke a meditative cigar and try to arrive at some final decision as to what would be the wisest thing to do with the boy in time to come.

It seemed to me that in taking the lad's future into my own hands I had saddled myself with a very serious responsibility. Would it not have been better if I had left him as I had found him, with no higher ambition than to accompany his uncle about the streets with an organ or a few white mice? What good had I done, either him or myself, by trying to educate him and instil into him the manners and instincts of a gentleman? His father before him had been a brigand, and he himself would be a brigand at heart as long as he lived. Polish him and veneer him as one might, the half-tamed robber of the hills could not help showing his teeth now and again.

But next moment I blamed myself for my harsh thoughts of the poor boy. When I called to mind the surroundings of his childish years, and how his earliest impressions must have been formed, it seemed to me that, whatever the result might have been, I should have had no right to marvel at it. Ought not the fracas with young Stratton to be looked upon as a logical consequence of the boy's

antecedents and early training, and was the boy himself really very much to blame in the matter? Instead of being disheartened by the partial failure of my efforts up to the present time, ought I not to persevere still more earnestly in my endeavours to reclaim this wayward young mind. If I were to discard him, who else in the wide world would do anything for him? The chances were that, at his age, if I were to let go my hold of him, he would gradually, but inevitably, sink into a life of squalor and degradation, from which he would never emerge again. For such a result, would he or I be the more to blame?

And then again, when I called to mind the lad's brightness, docility, and intelligence, when I thought of his quick, vivacious ways, and the unbounded affection that he evinced towards myself, my heart softened towards him, and I made up my mind, there and then, that, come what might, I would never abandon him.

I had flung away the end of my cigar, and was about to turn homeward, when my ear was attracted by the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps on the hard dry pathway. The lane was a lonely one. There had been two or three burglaries in the neighbourhood lately, and it struck me that I might just as well wait and see who it was that was coming along in such a hurry. I had been leaning over a gate, and was still standing in the shadow of the high hedge, so that I was all but invisible from the footpath. I had not many seconds to wait. A dusky figure emerged from the darkness, came nearer, passed me, and would have vanished again, had I not strode quickly after it and laid my hand on its shoulder. I had recognised Luigi as he passed me. He was hurrying along at a sort of dog-trot pace, following the footpath mechanically, his white, eager face turned up to the stars. As he hastened along he was muttering something to himself in Italian—a language that he rarely spoke now, except in moments of excitement—and gesticulating wildly, with his clenched hands and long thin arms, while every few seconds a sort of half-sob seemed to burst involuntarily from him.

"Luigi," I said, as I touched him on the shoulder, "where are you going?"

He collapsed at my touch as though he had been suddenly paralysed, and sank in a trembling heap at my feet.

"Going?" he stammered out. "I was going nowhere."

"Don't tell me an untruth, Luigi," I said, sternly. "You have no business here at this time of night."

"I was going away, signor."

"Where were you going?"

"I don't know. Anywhere. I am tired of my life. I hate myself. I—I hate everybody."

"What folly is this?" I said. "You talk like a silly girl, and not like a boy with any manliness about him. Come back home at once."

"I cannot—I cannot," he moaned. "All day long, signor, you hardly ever look at me, or speak to me, and when you do look at me your eyes freeze me. They seem to say, 'You have disgraced yourself and disgraced me. Why don't you go back to your own country?'"

"Luigi Coroni, you are a young idiot," I returned. "If you were my son I should give you a sound thrashing. That would be the best medicine for such folly as yours. Come: I cannot wait here all night."

His only reply was a low, inarticulate cry. Then, before I knew what had happened, he had twisted himself out of my hands, and had started off at full speed down the lane.

I stood staring after him for a moment, bewildered by this sudden move, and then I started in pursuit. Fast as he might run, I knew that my long legs would quickly overtake him. A quarter of a mile further the lane opened on to the high road, but I calculated that I should come up with him before he got even as far as that. "He cannot escape me," I said to myself. But hardly had the words passed my lips when the flying figure in front of me suddenly swerved aside, and bounding over a narrow stile that made a gap in the hedge, was racing next moment across the pasture on the other side. He gained a second or two by the move, but I was quickly through the stile and following in his footsteps. I could dimly discern him some fifty yards or so ahead of me.

For the first few moments I was at a loss to comprehend what his object could be in thus taking to the fields, but all at once I remembered, with a sickening feeling of horror, that on the opposite side of the meadow, across which we were now racing, was the canal. Surely the desperate boy could not be going to attempt suicide! I redoubled my efforts to overtake him, but he still kept considerably ahead of me.

The canal was now no great distance away, although, in the darkness nothing could be seen of it. A little to the right of the line in which Luigi was running, a bridge spanned the sluggish stream, and it was with a feeling of infinite relief that I saw him heading in that direction. Once let him cross it, and reach the level fields beyond, and I must inevitably overtake him. "Yes—he is going to cross the bridge," I said, and hardly had the words escaped me when he was on it. But instead of crossing it, he stopped suddenly short in the middle of it, and resting his hands for a moment on the parapet, he bounded lightly on to the top of it. For the space of two or three seconds his slight boyish figure, as he stood thus, was clearly outlined against the starlit sky; then he suddenly clasped his hands above his head and sprang headlong into the black waters below.

A cry of horror burst from my lips. By this time I was close to the banks of the canal. A moment later I was on the towing-path, within a dozen yards of the spot where Luigi had first struck the

water. I knew that the boy could not swim an inch, if his life depended on it. Even while my eyes were scanning the water to watch for his reappearance, I was mechanically thrusting off my shoes and coat. There he was! head and shoulders showing above the surface for a moment, and then, with a low, gurgling cry he disappeared once more. But I marked the spot, and two minutes later I had him safely on the bank. I said no word to him, nor he to me. I wrapped my coat round him, lifted him in my arms (he felt little more than skin and bone), and started homeward at a rapid pace, taking a cross-cut through the fields.

"And have I driven the boy to this?" I asked myself, as I paced along. "Fatherless, motherless, and now, at twelve years of age, he is so tired of his life that he tries to put an end to it! I have been too hard with him—too hard."

I bent my head and kissed his cold, wet forehead. A low sigh, that seemed to breathe of happiness and sweet satisfaction, was his only response, but he knew that from that moment the past was forgiven.

Beyond a severe cold, from which he recovered in the course of a fortnight, Luigi took no harm from his immersion. He was his old happy self again, and it was hard to believe that any tragic possibilities, or unsounded depths of latent crime, could lurk behind that sunny face, or those merry, laughing eyes. The problem, what to do with him, was still an unsolved one, but, for the present, it was left in abeyance. My aunt Honeyton had taken him under her wing for the time being, and she it was who set him his lessons from day to day. She was continually singing Luigi's praises. "I never knew a boy who was so quick at learning, or so docile in every way," she often said. "He ought to make a very clever man, and he will if he is properly managed."

But all my perplexities with regard to Luigi's future were suddenly put an end to. One day I was surprised by an unexpected visit from Pinelli. He was dressed in a new suit of clothes, a huge watch guard was festooned across his waistcoat, and his face was one broad grin of satisfaction. A rich uncle had died, and had left Pinelli his sole heir. The ex-brigand was going to give up organ-grinding, go back to Italy, realize his property, and settle down into a respectable member of society. As a matter of course, he wanted to take Luigi with him.

"But I thought you told me that a price was set on your head by the authorities," I said; "and that if they once got you into their clutches you would either be hung or shot?"

"I am a rich man, now, signor, and I shall know how to manage all that," returned the fellow, with a sly twinkle of the eyes. "In my country a few thousand scudi will effect many wonderful things. Besides, I am not going back to Calabria. My uncle had a farm and a vineyard a few miles from Naples, and I shall settle down there

for the rest of my days. Everything will be Luigi's when I am gone."

"But what do you intend to do with Luigi? He ought to have three or four more years at school."

"I have thought of all that, signor. I intend Luigi to study the law. When he grows up he shall become an avvocato."

Pinelli laid his hand on his heart, and swelled visibly with importance as he gave utterance to these words. That his family should one day count an advocate among its members was evidently something to be inordinately proud of. Perhaps, under the circumstances, the idea was as good a one as could have been suggested. Luigi would certainly have been out of his element as a cultivator of grapes, nor was there anything about him to induce me to think that he would have felt more at home as a son of the Church. With his quick and apprehensive intellect the probability was that he would feel more affinity for the Law than for any other profession.

He did not attempt to disguise his sorrow at having to leave me, but, all things considered, it certainly seemed to me best that he should go with Pinelli. He was heart-broken when the moment came for saying farewell, but I knew that by the time he had travelled fifty miles his impressionable fancy would be taken up with the strange faces and strange scenes around him, and that the sharp edge of his regret would quickly wear itself away.

CHAPTER IV.

AT LARCH COTTAGE.

SEVEN years had come and gone since the events recorded in the last chapter. My father was dead, and for three of those years Larch Cottage had been my permanent home. Every few months I had heard from Luigi Coroni, and the burden of his letters was generally the same. Penelli was well, and ever remembered me with gratitude and respect. Luigi made good progress with his studies. Occasionally, at long intervals, he came over from Italy to see me, and he was now on one of these visits to Larch Cottage.

Coroni was now about twenty years of age. He had developed into an extremely handsome young man, and possessed an easy gaiety of manner, mingled with an air of courteous deference towards others, which was very fascinating, especially to ladies. He was quite a dandy in his way, but was too much addicted to velvet coats and jewellery for my simpler tastes. But it was impossible to apply the same standard to a young Italian that one would to an Englishman of the same age.

Luigi was fairly accomplished, in the society sense of the term. He could speak English, French, and Italian with almost equal correctness and purity of accent. He had a charming tenor voice, which he

knew how to use to the best advantage, and he was a facile if somewhat showy player on several instruments. He had a natural gift for mimicry, and could give clever imitations of the leading actors of the day. He could sing love songs to the ladies in three languages, and accompany himself on the guitar, while, for those whose tastes were less frivolous, he could declaim long passages from the "Inferno," with amazing fire and judgment. He had studied for the Law, as Pinelli had promised that he should do, but whether he would ever earn his living by his profession was quite another matter. At present he seemed in no lack of funds, and to have nothing to do but see the world and enjoy himself. He had spent a couple of years in Paris at one time or another, but it was doubtful whether he had been improved thereby. In any case, he was a very pleasant inmate to have in a country house, and could do much towards entertaining the other guests. He looked up to me with a strange mixture of reverence and affection, and would watch me about from place to place with something of the same expression in his eyes that I have seen in those of a faithful hound. To Luigi's thinking, there was no man in the world in any way comparable to the friend who was associated with his earliest recollections.

"Luigi Coroni; and asleep."

It was Arthur Forester who spoke. We had gone into the smoking-room to have a last cigar, and a quiet chat, before separating for the night. On turning up the gas we found Luigi stretched on the sofa, fast asleep.

"He's tired out, poor fellow," continued Forester, as he laid a hand caressingly on the young man's curls. "No need to disturb him until we go to bed."

Accordingly we drew our chairs up to the fire, lighted our cigars, and let Coroni sleep on.

For five years Forester had been in China, fulfilling an appointment there. He was now in England on a six months' leave of absence. After that, he would return to China for three years, and then come back to England for good. He had been spending a month with me at Larch Cottage, and this, the last night of his stay, had arrived.

Often during that month, I had been moody and abstracted, for no apparent cause, and Forester had more than once laughingly accused me of being in love, little thinking how near the truth he was. To-night I had resolved to take him into my confidence.

We seemed to have said all that we had to say, and had been smoking in silence for several minutes, when at length, after a glance over my shoulder at the sleeper, I spoke again.

"You may, perhaps, remember," I said, "the miniature of a young girl I was wont to carry about with me in the old days, and, indeed, wear still?"

"Quite well," returned Forester, smiling. "You saved her life while bathing at Scarborough; and I remember telling you the young lady would one day become a woman, and prove dangerous to your peace of mind."

"As you foretold," I replied, "so it has come to pass. To make a long tale short, Arthur, Mary and I have been engaged now for the last three years. I think I told you that, as an only child, she would probably one day come into a large fortune. Her father died about eighteen months ago, but the mother still lives—a scheming, ambitious woman. I had Mr. Harewood's full and free consent to my engagement with Mary, but Mrs. Harewood has always looked coldly on my pretensions. Only one consideration reconciled her in any degree to our engagement. That was the probability of my one day coming into the family title and estates. She knew that my uncle was a widower and childless, that my father's health was delicate, and that in all likelihood I should ultimately become Sir George Raymund, of Grantley Towers. In view of this contingency, she gave a grudging consent to my engagement with Mary. I believe the woman is foolish enough to think that her daughter ought to look at nobody of lower rank than a lord. Mary and I, however, have contrived to be very happy together, despite her mother's ungracious treatment.

"You know already that some three years previously to his death my father entered into a series of disastrous speculations, which ultimately resulted in the loss of half his fortune.

"As a consequence, when his will was proved it was found that his son would be by no means so rich a man as the world, in its wisdom, had supposed he would be.

"Mrs. Harewood did not fail to let me know how deeply she felt the disgrace, as she termed it, of having allowed her daughter to engage herself to a person who had turned out to be so very much poorer than he had any right to be. She did her best, both by tongue and pen, to sting me into breaking off my engagement with Mary. But I saw through her scheme and kept out of her way as much as possible. So long as Mary remained true to me I cared but little for what either Mrs. Harewood or the world might think or say.

"But another blow was in store for me, of which I never dreamed. About three weeks ago I received a letter from Mrs. Harewood in which she said that she had been informed, on most excellent authority, that my uncle, Sir Marmaduke Raymund, was on the eve of contracting another marriage. If such should prove to be the case, she said, she must insist upon my engagement with Mary being cancelled at once and for ever.

"I was dumfounded for a time, and yet, when I came to think the matter over, there was little real cause for surprise. It was quite within the range of probability that my uncle should marry again, but

he had been a widower for so many years that, half unconsciously, we had all got into the way of believing that he would remain one for the rest of his days. The most evident thing to do was to make some enquiries on my own account, with the view of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of the report in Mrs. Harewood's letter. Accordingly, I at once wrote to an old friend of my father, who lives within a couple of miles of Grantley Towers, and who makes a point of being acquainted with all the gossip and scandal of the neighbourhood. I did not receive his answer till this morning. Here it is."

I took a letter from my pocket and opened it. Both of us glanced at Coroni. His soft and regular breathing told us that he was still asleep. "As my old friend writes rather a crabbed hand, perhaps I had better read you what he says," I remarked. "After apologising, on the ground of his absence from home, for not answering my letter sooner, he goes on thus: 'I am afraid that I shall have to answer the main query in your letter in the affirmative. There can be little doubt, I think, that your uncle contemplates matrimony again—more fool he, at his time of life! His *innamorata* is the widow of a major of artillery, who, after living in Cheltenham for two or three years, took, last summer, a furnished villa not far from here and began at once to set her cap at your uncle. From what I can make out, she is a clever, bold, and unscrupulous woman; not without her share of good looks, you may be sure, but terribly "made up"—at least, my women-folk hint as much to me. She looks eight-and-twenty, acknowledges to being thirty, but is, in all probability, nearly forty years of age. She is one of those women who have the art of always looking a dozen years younger than they really are.

"'If the widow looks a dozen years younger than her age, your uncle looks a dozen years older than his. I am told that he drinks harder than ever, and I know for a fact that he has had two sharp attacks of illness within the last twelve months. What a queerly assorted couple he and the widow will make. What a struggle there will be for supremacy; but I would lay long odds that the widow will come off victor in the long run.

"'Some one who has just come in tells me that the painters and upholsterers are already up at the Towers, and are turning the place inside out. Also, that the wedding is to take place at the beginning of May.'"

"I am very sorry for you, my dear fellow," said Forester, as I returned the letter to my pocket; "very sorry indeed. One of the dearest wishes of my later days has been that I might live long enough to see you master of Grantley Towers. So Mrs. Harewood's information seems to be correct?"

"There cannot be a doubt of it," I answered.

"Have you replied to her letter?"

"Not yet. In fact, I hardly know in what terms to answer it.

Of course, it's quite within her province to break off the engagement between Mary and myself; but although Mary may refuse to marry without her mother's consent, not all that mother's power can force her into marrying against her will. Mrs. Harewood will have to choose between permitting her daughter to wed the man of her choice, and seeing her remain unmated for life."

"Mrs. Harewood will be sure to give way," said Arthur; "if not at once, at all events in the course of a year or two."

"I am not so sure of that. She is obstinate to a degree when once her mind is made up. Besides, she has set her heart on her daughter marrying a title. No; I know the kind of woman Mrs. Harewood is. Mary will be badgered and worried, and her life be made thoroughly wretched, while I, knowing what she will have to put up with, can hardly be accounted the happiest of men. But there's two o'clock striking. High time to go to roost and forget our troubles in sleep."

We rose and pushed back our chairs. Coroni was still sleeping. I shook him gently by the shoulder. He started up, rubbed his eyes, stared about him, and apologised for his apparent rudeness. Then he accompanied us into the hall and took his bed-candle at the same time that we took ours.

Forester left Larch Cottage next morning, and three weeks later sailed for China again. A fortnight after landing at Hong Kong, happening to take up an English newspaper, he was astounded to read in it an account of the death of Sir Marmaduke Raymund, of Grantley Towers. It was too true. He had been found dead in his bed. Heart disease of long standing was declared to be the specific complaint which had brought his life to so sudden a close. Forester wrote to congratulate me on my accession to the family honours, and bade me not to forget to send him a slice of wedding-cake, even though it should have to travel all the way to Hong Kong.

CHAPTER V. AND LAST.

THE DEBT PAID.

FOUR years later Arthur Forester's health broke down and he returned home for good. He soon picked up strength and appetite in his native air, and one of his first visits, after he was able to visit anyone, was to his friend Sir George Raymund. For three years now I had occupied Grantley. Mrs. Harewood's objections had disappeared with my changed prospects, and Mary and I had married as soon as I came into the title. When Forester came down to me he found the household increased by two sturdy youngsters who called me papa.

A great part of my time was taken up with looking after the improvement of my property, and in striving to undo the manifold evils wrought by my predecessor. Nearly everything had been

allowed more or less to go to rack and ruin, and both time and money were needed to bring back the property to its original condition.

Arthur generally accompanied me in my walk or ride over the estate between breakfast and luncheon. On such occasions our conversation often fell upon old times and scenes of long ago. In the course of one of our rambles Coroni's name cropped up, and Forester asked me when I had last heard of the young Italian.

"He is dead," I answered, sadly enough. "He was shot during the terrible days of the Commune."

For a moment there was silence. Arthur seemed much affected, for he had taken a fancy to Coroni. In a little while I spoke again.

"When Paris was about to be invested by the Germans, Luigi chose to remain shut up in it rather than go away. He thought that by so doing he should see some aspects of life different from anything he could ever hope to see again. You know that he was rather clever with his pencil, and he thought that during the siege he should be able to make a number of sketches which he could afterwards elaborate into pictures, and that thereby both fame and money might accrue to him. He pulled through all right until after the Germans had left Paris, but his insatiable curiosity induced him to still remain there after the city was given over to the wild frenzy of the Communist mob. He was sketching a night attack on a barricade when he was shot down by one of the assailants. He was carried to a hospital where he lingered for nearly a month and then died."

Later in the day I said to Forester: "Come into my den for half an hour, Arthur: I have something to show you."

When he had drawn a chair up to the fire, I unlocked a drawer in my bureau and drew therefrom a thin roll of paper. "I did not know of Coroni's death till three months after the event," I said. "Then I received a visit from the priest who had attended him during his last hours, and who furnished me with all particulars of the affair. He also brought with him these sheets of paper, on which Luigi, after he was wounded and knew that he could not recover, had written down, a few lines at a time, a most startling and remarkable confession—so remarkable, indeed, that, with the exception of my wife, I have shown it to no one till now. You, however, shall read it, because I want your opinion as to whether you think I ought to take any further steps in the affair, and if so, what those steps ought to be. The priest, of course, was acquainted with the contents of the paper—indeed, it was he who urged upon Luigi the necessity of putting down in writing the facts stated therein, they having been made known to him previously under the seal of confession. But with him, of course, the secret is as safe as though it had never been told. The original paper is written in Italian, but I have made a literal translation of it. Before you begin it, however, I may just say that Luigi left Larch Cottage rather suddenly some three or four

days after your departure, and that though I occasionally heard from him afterwards, I never saw him again." I drew my chair closer to Forester's, unfolded the manuscript, and gave it him to read. It ran as follows :—

"DEAR AND BELOVED SIGNOR,—On this bed of death, on which I now lie, my thoughts turn to you more frequently than to anyone else. I shall never see you again, but the good father who visits me here has told me that, before it is too late, I ought to put down in writing my account of certain matters which very nearly concern you. He has promised that if I will do so he will himself convey the paper into your hands, and that no eyes shall see it before it reaches you. My intention was to die without saying a word of that which follows ; and it is only at the good father's earnest persuasion that I have been induced to pen this confession.

"Do you remember, signor, a certain evening among the hills when you, I, my father, and my mother sat together for the last time? You were to leave us on the morrow, and the time had come for me to bid you farewell. Then my father laid his hand on my head : 'Luigi,' he said, 'never forget that this gentleman has saved thy mother's life. If at any future time it should be in thy power to do him any service, whatever the cost may be to thyself, thou wilt not fail to do it.'

"I have never forgotten my father's words. I have never forgotten the promise I then made. But years, many years passed away ; and it seemed as if no occasion would ever arise to enable me to prove that my father's command still dwelt in my memory.

"The long-waited-for occasion came at last.

"Do you remember, one evening, now more than two years ago, during the time I was on a visit to Larch Cottage, when you and your friend found me fast asleep on the sofa in the smoking-room? Perhaps you have forgotten a circumstance so trivial, but I have not. In any case, there I was. You and your friend smoked and talked, and by-and-by I awoke. But you were sitting with your backs towards me and you did not see me open my eyes. Some words that you were saying induced me to lie very still and shut my eyes again. I heard you tell your friend that your uncle, the great man who drank so much brandy, was about to get married, and that because such was the case a lady whom you loved and who loved you could not become your wife. And you never knew that I had heard a word.

"But the words I heard could not let themselves be forgotten. Day and night they fluttered in my brain like young birds fluttering in their nest. I could think of nothing else. At length I made up my mind that I would seek out this great Sir Marmaduke and see for myself what kind of man he was. I bade you farewell, little thinking, alas ! that I should never see you again. Two days later I was at Grantley Towers.

"My face and hands were stained, and I was dressed like a Roman pifferari, but instead of carrying the Roman pipes, whose music the Inglesi do not care for, I carried my favourite violin. Finding my way to the back of the great house, I began to play a merry dance tune before the windows where I saw the servants at work. At first they ordered me away, but I only laughed and nodded my head and went on playing. By-and-by they came and stood in a cluster to listen to me. I played tune after tune for them till they were tired. Then they made me go inside, and gave me a little money and as much food as I could eat and carry away with me. I led them to understand that I could only speak a very few words of English, but when they said, 'Come again to-morrow,' I laughed and nodded my head to show that I knew what they meant.

"I did go again on the morrow, and several times afterwards. Little thinking that I could understand them, the servants talked freely enough among themselves about Sir Marmaduke's coming marriage, and wondered what sort of a mistress the new wife would prove to be. Sir Marmaduke was nearly always away in the evenings when I was there. He went to see the lady he was going to marry, and when he came home he had nearly always had too much brandy. The other servants laughed at Pierre, the valet, because his master never forgot to swear at him before getting into bed, and Pierre laughed in his turn, because he never forgot to pay his respects to the decanter which stood on the little table by his master's bedside.

"I wanted to see this Sir Marmaduke, so I hid myself one night among the laurel bushes near the great door and watched him come home. He was helped out of his carriage by Pierre, whom he did not fail to abuse. He was lame and walked with a stick. He had grey hair, and a very red face, and little, fierce, blood-shot eyes. 'Great heavens!' I said to myself, 'is this the miserable life that stands in the way of my beloved signor's happiness?' The heavy doors clashed behind him, and I walked across the dark fields to my bed in the barn of the village inn, thinking as I seemed never to have thought before.

"Night after night I hid myself among the laurels and watched. I found out which was Sir Marmaduke's bedroom. A scheme, a great scheme, began to shape itself slowly in my brain. It took days and nights of thinking before it stood out in all its completeness. But there it was at last. I laughed aloud and played merry tunes on my fiddle, though I was all alone. The promise I had given my father was about to bear fruit at last.

"Sir Marmaduke's bedroom was on the first floor. It had two French windows, which gave access to a balcony. All night long a faint light burnt in the room. Night after night I watched those windows from my hiding-place among the laurels. At length my plan was ready for carrying out, and I had only to wait and watch for my opportunity.

"That opportunity came when, one night, Sir Marmaduke reached home more helpless than usual. Without Pierre's aid he would have fallen, and it was Pierre's arm that supported him up the steps, and across the hall, and upstairs to his bedroom. He could not swear to-night, though he tried hard to do so. He could only growl inarticulately in his throat.

"I watched the light in the bedroom. I saw Pierre's shadow cross the blinds. Then in a little while the candles were put out, only the faint night-light being left burning; and I knew that Pierre had left his master to repose. By-and-by the other lights went out one by one; and an hour later the whole great house was wrapped in darkness; all except the two windows in Sir Marmaduke's room, which stared into the night like two wan eyes from which the light of life was slowly dying out. An hour longer I waited, till I felt as if I and the wind and the trees—so lonely was it—were the only things alive on earth.

"Then I made my way to a certain greenhouse which, I knew, from a secret visit previously paid, contained the very article I wanted. That article was a gardener's ladder long enough to reach from the ground to the balcony of Sir Marmaduke's window. Five minutes later I stood on the balcony. Listening intently, I could hear Sir Marmaduke's hard breathing inside the room. With the blade of my pocket-knife I pushed back the catch of the window; then I slipped off my shoes, pushed back one sash, drew the blind gently aside, and found myself in the baronet's bedroom.

"Sir Marmaduke lay on his back, asleep, and breathing heavily. On the little table close at hand stood a night-light and a decanter of brandy. I stood and looked in his face for a minute or two. There was no fear of his waking. Then, from one of my pockets I drew a cambric handkerchief, new, and white as snow, which I had bought a few days before. In another pocket I found a tiny phial of chloroform. (Ah! signor, it was from you that I first learnt some of the uses of chloroform. My poor mother used to say that it was sent by the saints as a blessed gift to us poor sinners.) Having saturated the handkerchief with chloroform, I spread it lightly and gently over the sleeping man's face. He never moved. I sat down by the bedside and waited. A yellow-backed French novel lay on the floor. I picked it up and read a chapter. After three minutes Sir Marmaduke ceased to breathe so loudly: after six minutes he did not seem to breathe at all. The easy-chair in which I sat was comfortable, the French novel was entertaining, I was in no hurry and could afford to wait. At the end of an hour I put down my book, rose, and drew the handkerchief from off Sir Marmaduke's face. He was beyond the powers of all the doctors in the world to bring back to life.

"I put the handkerchief in my pocket. I overturned the decanter of brandy and let its contents drip from the table on to the floor.

The strong smell of the spirit would overpower the faint odour of the chloroform. I stole out of the room as noiselessly as I had entered it, and closed the window after me. In the balcony I found my shoes. I went down the ladder and carried it back to the greenhouse. The greenhouse was warm, and I slept there till the first streaks of daylight began to show themselves.

"What a commotion in the neighbourhood next forenoon! Sir Marmaduke had been found dead in his bed. Three or four doctors were sent for post-haste—as if they could be of any use now! They could only shake their heads, look wise, and whisper, 'Heart disease.' I lingered in the neighbourhood a day or two longer, then I took the train for London, threw off my pifferari dress, and started for Paris. My heart was light as a feather. I had rid the earth of a wretch who was unfit to live; I had done the one man whom I loved better than all the rest of the world an inestimable benefit, and I had paid the legacy of gratitude left me by my father."

Here ended the confession. Forester folded up the MS. and returned it to me.

"There are a few more lines," I said, "chiefly expressive of regret at not being able to see me again, but it is not needful to read them."

"A strange confession, indeed," remarked Forester, after a pause. "And one of the strangest features in it is that the writer seems rather to glory in what he has done."

"He did glory in it, undoubtedly. The old priest who brought me the MS. told me it was only by threatening to refuse him absolution that he could get Luigi to express the slightest sorrow for his crime, and that, even then, he felt sure the sorrow was merely on his lips and never touched his heart. To Luigi's pagan mind—and a pagan he was to all intents and purposes—what he had done seemed an essentially meritorious thing to do, and he could not comprehend why anyone should blame him for it. To benefit a friend and get rid of an enemy at the same time was the true philosophy of life, as Luigi understood it."

"And you have never read this MS. to anyone but your wife and me?" said Forester.

"To no one else. And now, Arthur, I want your advice as to what you think I ought to do in the matter."

Forester paused a few moments, then replied: "Sir Marmaduke is dead, Coroni is dead, and you, the legal heir, have come into your rights. These are facts which nothing can alter. My advice is that you put back the MS. into your bureau and say nothing about it to anyone."

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

I.

ONE spring morning, many years ago, the clock of a village church about a day's journey from Paris chimed out the hour of six. At that moment an ambitious young man named Dumas attained the age of one-and-twenty. His mother stood at his bedside, but there was grief, not rejoicing, in her face. Her eyes rested fondly yet sadly on the figure of her son, who slept soundly in spite of having just attained his majority. Pride and affection prompted Madame Dumas to wake her son on this particular morning, which should have been a joyful one to both; but anxiety held her back, and her only greeting was a tear which fell upon his face.

This, or that indefinable sense we sometimes have in sleep that somebody is near us, roused the young man.

"Astir already, mother!" he exclaimed gaily. "As you are one of the only two persons in France who know what a distinguished youth has just attained the dignity of manhood, no wonder you are up early! But you are in tears! How is this?"

"Forgive me," murmured Madame Dumas with a sob; "I am sick at heart."

"And why, mother? Is it because everybody but ourselves is careless whether Alexandre Dumas has lived for twenty-one years, or whether no such person exists? Parbleu, we shall soon enlighten the world on that subject!"

"Ah! my son," said his mother, "the lightness of your heart makes mine the heavier. I wished to conceal from you the misfortune which threatens us, but now I must speak. What is to become of us I cannot tell, for we have only five louis left!"

The revelation did not strike Dumas as very dreadful, for, taking his mother's face in both his hands, he burst into a laugh.

"Only five louis! Do you know how many men have bribed Fortune with less? Of course you don't, but I tell you I am going to be a remarkable addition to the number." Then seeing that her tears were starting afresh, he added: "Really and truly, mother, I have an idea—a marvellous idea. Let me get up, and I will tell you all about it. A man cannot cogitate satisfactorily in bed—at all events, I can't. Depend upon it, my idea will be the making of us."

Madame Dumas shook her head sorrowfully, and quitted the room.

As a matter of fact, the young man had not the ghost of an idea, and the expression of confidence which had animated his features a moment before was succeeded by a look of utter perplexity.

"May the deuce run away with me," he muttered, "if I know what to do!"

In this frame of mind he proceeded to dress himself. Looking about for his cravat, he saw a kitten playfully tearing it in a corner. Going to the rescue, he perceived a small piece of paper, which he mechanically opened. It was the back of an old catalogue in which had been wrapped some new pens, and on it was a name, printed in large characters, at sight of which he struck his forehead, and rushed off in search of his mother, leaving the kitten to demolish the cravat at her leisure.

Madame Dumas gazed in astonishment at her son, who burst into her room with a shout, and relieved his feelings by waltzing with as much of the furniture as was movable. The mother's heart received a new shock. Had Alexandre, under the pressure of their troubles, suddenly gone mad?

"Look, mother!" he exclaimed, throwing himself breathlessly on the couch beside her.

She took the paper from his hand, and read the words to which he pointed: "Paris. Imprimerie Dupont."

Madame Dumas' mind was as much a blank as before, and again the terrible fear as to her son's mental condition passed through her like a knife.

"Yes, Paris!" he cried excitedly. "There must be many patriots there able and willing to help the widow of an old soldier. I will set off this very day. Three of the louis will be enough to take with me; the remainder will support you till you learn the result of my venture. Without doubt, I shall find work to sustain us both. Now, mother, what do you think of my idea?"

Not being possessed by the illusions and the enthusiasm of one-and-twenty, Madame Dumas could not see the visions which her son had conjured out of the old catalogue.

"My son," she said, "you have yet to learn that bright dreams and a good heart do not always win their way in this world. How many people I have met, who, while I pleaded to them with my tears, passed, like the priest and the Levite, on the other side! Alas! you will meet with trials and disappointments of which you have now no thought."

The young man laid his fingers caressingly on her lips.

"I charge you, mother, to cease this doleful strain! No more discouragement, I entreat. I am off now," he added, taking up his hat, "to see my old tutor, the curé. He has the wisdom of the serpent and is sure to give me some useful hints. Au revoir!"

Half an hour later young Dumas returned, triumphantly brandishing a letter of introduction to a retired general, resident in Paris.

"Behold my passport!" he cried. "No cause to despair now, mother. The curé is quite of my way of thinking, and this letter is a key with which I shall unlock all the doors in Paris that are worth

opening! The general is a kind-hearted old boy, and has scores of friends to whom he is sure to introduce me. In a week, or a fortnight at latest, you may expect me to come for you, and we will make a triumphal entry into Paris together. Do you know, the curé says the general has a bullet in his right knee which has been there for twenty years. It baffled every surgeon in the army, and the general says it is the only enemy he was never able to dislodge."

So he rattled on, as he made his preparations for departure; and Madame Dumas fancied that it was all a dream, until she felt her son's arms around her, and heard him whisper a few broken words of farewell.

A minute afterwards she was supporting herself against the garden gate, striving to see through her blinding tears the receding figure of Alexandre on the high road to the capital.

II.

From this sketch of Alexandre Dumas at the age of twenty-one the reader will easily perceive that those brilliant heroes of romance whom we have all followed through so many volumes of adventure were all counterparts of their prolific author. Like them he had abundance of spirits, ready resource, remarkable self-confidence, and that ceaseless unrest and dash of movement which would have made Messieurs Athos, Porthos, and D'Artagnan traverse half a mile of powder barrels, though every step increased the hazard of being blown to the four winds.

The lively imagination of Dumas had exaggerated the virtues of his letter of introduction. He waited upon one officer of distinction after another who had known his father, and though all received him with civility, none proposed to put themselves to the smallest inconvenience to do him a service. The last upon his list was much worse off in worldly circumstances than his brother soldiers, and as Alexandre mounted to the fifth floor, on which eminence the general had made his habitation, he felt like the leader of a forlorn hope.

But an agreeable surprise was in store for him, for after listening to his story, the old officer shook him warmly by the hand and said:

"It is enough, mon ami. We are comrades. Your father shared his purse with me. What should I think of myself if I refused mine to his son?"

Then he gave Dumas a letter of recommendation to a personage of high rank in the army, who had great influence with the powers that were. This, Alexandre—whose recent experience did not dispose him to expect much from people who dwelt in their own hotels, and displayed their armorial bearings on the gates—presented, with much inward misgiving.

"Ah! you are the son of Dumas," said the general, stroking a very grizzly moustache. "He was a lion on the field, and he and I did

wonders together in Egypt. Well, you want employment. What do you know?"

Dumas differed from his famous musketeers in one respect. He had some modesty—at this period, at any rate—and he answered:

"Not much; a little Latin."

"Hum! No mathematics?"

"That is a file I could never get my teeth into."

"So much the worse for you. However, I will try to do something. I dine this evening with the Duc d'Orleans; I will speak to him about you, and perhaps he will find you a place. Leave me your address."

As Dumas wrote down the locality of his humble quarters, the general patted him on the shoulder.

"Tenez, mon ami. Your position is assured. With that handwriting you will have no difficulty in getting employment as an expéditionnaire."

To tell an aspiring littérateur that he would make an excellent copying-clerk seemed to Dumas about as reasonable as to invite an eagle to take up his habitation in a dove's nest. It was not a time, however, for expostulation, so, suppressing his feelings, Alexandre acknowledged the compliment to his handwriting with the best grace he could command. A few days later he was formally invested with the dignity, and entitled to the emoluments, of an expéditionnaire.

In this capacity Dumas supported himself and his mother for more than three years, devoting his leisure to the composition of tragedies, which he burned one after another. Sick of the society of his colleagues in the office, he determined to seclude himself; and, after hunting about for some time, he discovered in the bureau a sort of closet, black, dusty, and scarcely large enough to admit a human being, in which were stored the ink-bottles and other appurtenances of his calling. Here Dumas established himself, glad of any place, however uncomfortable, in which he could woo the Muse undisturbed in the intervals of bondage.

The office porter, who occasionally explored the recesses of the closet, was indignant at this usurpation, and lodged a complaint, which was so effectual that Alexandre was compelled to evacuate his fortress. Accordingly, he returned to the common room, where he was received with much sarcasm.

But though it might be necessary, as the proverb has it, to howl with the wolves, it did not follow, in Dumas' opinion, that he ought to bray with the donkeys, so he made representations to a high official, the result of which was that he received an order formally making over to him the haunt which he coveted. Next day he took possession of his little kingdom of four feet square, and heedless of dust, ink-bottles, and red tape, buried himself in his manuscripts.

Presently the porter appeared and threatened Dumas with the wrath of the chief if he did not move out at once.

"J'y suis, j'y reste!" replied Alexandre, little thinking that this phrase would one day have the honour of being employed by the head of the French nation.

Then, as the porter became more aggressive, Dumas took him by the collar and deposited him gently in the corridor.

This achievement brought up the chief of the bureau in a fury, and the audacious expéditionnaire was ordered to quit the place on penalty of losing his post. Suddenly Dumas thrust under the nose of the enraged official the permit he had received from headquarters, and the enemy sullenly withdrew, leaving the embryo dramatist to make a note of the situation he had so dexterously brought to a climax. It was, however, rather a hazardous method of studying dramatic effect.

III.

THE tragedies continued to follow one another to the flames, Dumas having no hesitation in immolating the offspring of his imagination when they did not please him.

Suddenly Dumas received an inspiration which carried him to a higher point than any he had yet reached. "Hamlet" was represented at the Théâtre Français, and amongst the Parisian playgoers —not a great multitude—who entered into the spirit of that tragedy, none were so enthusiastic as young Dumas. He applauded till his arms ached, and then went home with his head full of a new progeny of ideas which soon found embodiment in the play of "Christine de Suède." This composition was not burnt, and Alexandre now faced the formidable task of getting his tragedy introduced to the public. He had written it; but to strive to have it produced on the stage seemed like entering on an insane struggle with impossibility. Even supposing his energy and perseverance to be unconquerable, the problem was something like that of the old schoolmen, as to what would happen in the event of a collision between an irresistible force and an immovable object.

In those days there was attached to the Théâtre Français a government commissioner whose duty it was to act as a sort of foster-mother to unknown authors of merit. When he discovered a genius he introduced him to the manager. As may be easily imagined, the office was not a sinecure. The commissioner was beset by candidates for his favour from morning till night.

With his tragedy under his arm, Dumas waited one day upon this functionary, who, at that time, was M. le Baron Taylor. M. le Baron was engaged with another dramatic author, so Dumas amused himself as best he could in an ante-room.

It was Baron Taylor's habit to have new plays read to him while he was in his bath, or performing his toilette, and at this moment he was listening, or affecting to listen, to a fashionable personage who had conceived the idea that dramatic literature was his vocation,

and who was inflicting on the hapless commissioner five acts of appalling dullness.

At the end of the fourth act the Baron felt that he must do something to get rid of this terrible infliction.

"Suppose we postpone the fifth act," he suggested in a faint voice. "I am really not equal to it to-day."

"But, my dear Baron, the dénoûment! You must hear that. I assure you it is totally different from what you expect."

"Not at all," gasped the commissioner. "I believe it is so tragic that your present audience will be dead before your hero! Spare me that catastrophe, I entreat!"

"Spare you, indeed!" exclaimed the nettled author. "It would be a thing unheard of! You don't appreciate a tragedy, M. le Baron; but let me remind you that you are paid by the government to listen to me, and listen you shall!"

"True," groaned the Baron; "but the government does not give me a constitution, and I cannot endure any more of this!"

Here he made an attempt to get out of his bath, but the implacable dramatist thrust him back, determined to drown him rather than let him escape from the terrible fifth act. The torture was resumed, but Nature asserted herself, and long before the end of the reading the commissioner was slumbering peacefully.

"Well, what do you think of it?" said the fashionable personage, giving his victim a shake.

"Eh?" muttered the Baron, drowsily.

"What is your opinion of my tragedy?"

"Is it all over?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then, it is magnificent!" And bounding out of the bath, he snatched up his garments and disappeared into his dressing-room.

He had scarcely taken breath when there was a knock at the door, and Dumas was announced.

"Another tragedy!" ejaculated the Baron; and he sat himself down in despair.

Seeing the commissioner in a condition of extreme undress, Alexandre hesitated to open his manuscript.

"Oh, take a chair and proceed," said the Baron, with the air of a man about to have a tooth extracted. "You will excuse me if I go on dressing, as I am rather in a hurry. Begin. I am all attention."

Dumas read the first act. When this was finished he glanced at the commissioner, who was standing in front of him, with his shirt half on, evidently absorbed in the play.

"Perhaps I had better stop here, M. le Baron, and read you the rest another day," said Dumas. "I fear I am imposing on your good-nature."

"Imposing, young man! No such thing. What you have read to me is admirable. I am determined to hear every line before you leave the house. Ciel! if you knew what I have gone through this morning, you would not want to rob me of this compensation!"

Thus encouraged, Dumas read the rest of his tragedy with all the expression of which he was capable. As he pronounced the last word he raised his head and saw that the Baron had not altered his position, and was no further advanced with his attire than before. When he spoke, it was to the point.

"Come with me to the Théâtre Français at once, mon ami. Your fortune is made."

Breathless, Dumas accompanied the commissioner to the theatre. The manager named a day when the play should be read to the artists. The day came; the tragedy was received with acclamation, and Baron Taylor set out for the country to repair the ravages made in his constitution by senseless tragedies, having first had the satisfaction of seeing it announced in the newspapers that he had discovered a new dramatic genius.

IV.

WERE the difficulties of our author at an end? By no means. The commissioner being absent, the enthusiasm of the sociétaires of the Théâtre Français for "Christine de Suède" seemed to cool, for three months passed away, and there was no sign of preparations being made for the production of the play. Meanwhile, it was necessary to live, and Dumas had perforce to fall back on his handwriting, and earn bread for his mother and himself by copying the documents which poured into his miniature workshop at the bureau in greater numbers than ever, for his colleagues were resolved that he should have as little leisure as possible for any other occupation.

But in due course Baron Taylor returned, and his first act was to stir up the sociétaires on the subject of "Christine de Suède." The indefatigable Dumas had, however, completed a prose drama, "Henri III. et sa Cour," which he submitted for approval, and this, it was unanimously decided, should take precedence of the tragedy.

But the time which Dumas was now obliged to give to the theatre made his appearances at the office rather irregular, and this misdemeanour, greatly exaggerated by those who were envenomed against him, led to the loss of his post.

Deprived of his resources just when he seemed on the point of grasping fortune, Dumas felt his heart sink for the first time, as he saw his mother, weakened by illness, in want of daily bread. To her the future was still as hopeless as on the morning when her son left her to tread the thorny and uncertain road to fame.

"My poor boy, you have made a dreadful mistake, and this prospect of a glorious career will be the ruin of us both. Think of our

position if your play should not succeed! The butt of jests and sarcasms, you will be thrown upon the street without food and without a roof to cover us. Alas! you have given up the work which fed and clothed us, for the sake of a deceitful vision that can end only in wretchedness!"

With this wail in his ears, and a cruel anxiety gnawing at his heart, Dumas attended the rehearsals of his play. An actor in the company, to whom he partly confessed his position, lent him money enough to keep his mother alive, while he himself lived he scarcely knew how. Such was the situation of the man who, even at that moment, was the envy of all the obscure authors in France.

The night of the first representation of "Henri III." was fixed. A few hours before the performance Dumas made his last throw. He appeared before the Duc d'Orleans and solicited the presence of that prince at the theatre. Whether the Duc was surprised by the audacity of the quondam expéditionnaire into acquiescence, or whether he simply obeyed the impulse of a naturally kindly heart to perform a generous act which cost him nothing, or whether he thought that the courtly element in the play demanded, in the interests of the government, his personal recognition, it is needless to determine. Suffice it that when the curtain rose on the first scene of the play the Duc d'Orleans entered his box accompanied by all his suite. Royalty, like charity, conceals a multitude of imperfections, and perhaps it is not too cynical to suggest that this interest of the Duc in the play of the unknown author made the blemishes of the production less obvious than they might otherwise have been. From this point the success of "Henri III." was never doubtful. The ingenuity of the plot and the briskness of the scenic movement delighted everybody, and the Duc d'Orleans applauded with great vigour in the right places. When the curtain fell, and, in response to the demands of the audience, the manager announced the name of the author, the Duc stood up in his box, and raising his hat, gave the signal, as it were, for that remarkable popularity which, luckily for Alexandre Dumas, rested on a more solid foundation than royal condescension.

Edmund Kean, flying through the muddy streets to his wretched garret to tell his wife the glorious news of his triumph at Drury Lane, and Alexandre Dumas hurrying home to infuse new life into the veins of his sick and starving mother with the story of his success, are companion pictures. The latter seems to appeal more strongly to our sympathies, for the mother's joy over the fortunes of her son must have been mingled with a pathetic self-reproach that she had done so little to sustain that confidence in himself which had been so brilliantly justified.

"THE DREAM OF THE MOONBEAMS."

SENSATIONS were something like angel visits in Saint John's parish—very few and far between. Sometimes a breeze of news would blow in from the great outside world, to make a little ripple on the surface of society, and people went about for a few days talking of the matter which had stirred them up from their usual repose. A stagnant, peaceful, uneventful repose—as most of the few inhabitants of St. John's Dene found it. St. John's Dene was a small aristocratic village, with its one church : and really, the doings of that church constituted about all the business that arose there. The St. John's people prided themselves on this sleepy kind of existence, and to speak of any dreadful event in connection with them, such as a theft or an elopement, would be sure to bring down the indignation of that pretty place. Sometimes an event occurred among themselves which furnished food for chat and gossip for several days, and then life went on as it had been going on before the little social whirlwind came to set the atmosphere of St. John's Dene in brisker motion than usual.

Just now something great had occurred. The sleepy old organist, Mr. Gray, suddenly resigned his position as organist in St. John's church. He had occupied the post for many years, and everybody regarded him as a fixture. Accordingly, when he announced that he was going away from St. John's Dene, and that the trustees of the church had better be looking about for some one to fill his place, people were all astir with the excitement. Not so much that the quiet old man should be leaving them, as that they would want a successor to him.

It was all managed very quietly. The clergyman, Mr. Thorpe, proposed a gentleman whom he knew—a young man of good family, who was not a professional, but would take the place for a time. He was not rich, and the salary would be useful to him.

Of course there arose a great flutter among the young ladies of St. John's Dene. A handsome young organist would be a decided acquisition. Of course he was handsome! It would not be at all in accordance with the fitness of things if he turned out to be ugly.

Being a gentleman, and not a professional, they considered themselves justified in being curious upon the point.

The pretty little church was crowded on the first Sunday of his appearance, and every individual member of the congregation, of the gentler sex, had considered it her duty to put on her most becoming apparel and to look her best. Even Alice Cramer, one of the most sensible of girls, and the only daughter of proud old Mr. Cramer, of the Grange, as she stood before her glass that morning, getting ready

for church, had thought of the new organist, and pulled about the pray of white roses and half-opened buds that sat in her bonnet and half mingled with her soft, wavy brown hair. Letty Thorpe was going to wear her new bonnet that day, as Alice knew, and she and Letty stood side by side in the organ-loft together, being two of the singers.

"Papa," said Alice, entering the library, where her father sat, a white silk handkerchief thrown over his head, "are you sure you are not well enough to go to church to-day?"

"Of course I am not, Alice," was Mr. Cramer's peevish answer. "Did I not say so at breakfast?"

"But the new organist, papa, will be there."

"The new organist!" repeated Mr Cramer, in reproof; "what's the new organist to me? You know how these neuralgic headaches unfit me for anything when they come on. There; go; and shut the door, Alice."

To have to go to church by herself was nothing new to Miss Cramer. Mr. Cramer was at best a hypochondriac: especially had he been so since the death of his wife, three years ago, and Alice was now left much alone. The governess, Mrs. Bird, who had resided with them so long, had been called away by the illness of her mother. She had promised to return to Alice, as chaperon and companion, as soon as she should be at liberty, but it was hard to say when that time would be.

The new organist, Robert Karl Leith, sat before the organ when Alice ascended the stairs of the organ-loft, and took her place next to Letty Thorpe. She could not see much of him, except that he looked slender and gentlemanly, and had very fair hair.

"He is not at all like what I expected," whispered Letty to her. "Not in the least."

"In what way?" whispered back Alice.

"Not so handsome. I had pictured a dark, handsome man, with beautiful dark eyes. But there's something very nice about him, and one can see he is a gentleman. He will just suit your taste, I suppose. You like fair men."

The new organist chanced to turn round at the moment and caught them looking at him. Being a modest, retiring girl, Alice blushed, partly at that, partly at Letty's words. Mr. Leith thought it was one of the sweetest faces he had ever seen. A true, pure face, with a clear beauty in it like a star.

"How can you say such things, Letty!" she whispered in reproof. "And in church, too!"

The church was filling rapidly, and the organist began the voluntary. A ripple of pleased surprise ran through the ears of the congregation as he struck the opening chords. It was very different from Mr. Gray's playing. That was always a jog-trot kind of performance; this was the touch of a master. The old organ seemed suddenly to

have shaken off its drowsiness and renewed its youth. The rich, full, mellow harmonies filled the church and soared heavenward on the air of that still, beautiful morning, as if they were the voices of angels praising God.

"Is it not charming," whispered Letty, who could not keep silent though she was in church. "I have just heard that he is a German, and we all know how they play."

"Hush!" breathed Alice. "It is very beautiful."

The grand full chords seemed in perfect harmony with the peace that sat in her heart.

Mr. Leith's first essay as organist of St. John's Dene was very successful, winning him the favour of the congregation. His playing was so entirely different from Mr. Gray's that they began to wonder how they could have been content with that worthy gentleman's accomplishments. The churchwardens after service shook hands together, and congratulated themselves on their good luck in securing so satisfactory and efficient an artist. And then they turned and shook hands with himself at the church door. Letty Thorpe, with her usual disregard of conventionalities, invited him, under her mother's very eyes and hearing, to the Parsonage on the following evening, where they were going to have a small party for music.

"I will come," he replied, smiling: and Alice Cramer, standing by, thought what a pleasant smile it was, and how it transfigured to momentary beauty his otherwise rather plain face. "At present I seem like a man in a desert here, knowing nobody."

"We will introduce you to plenty of people to-morrow evening," cried chattering Letty. "And this is Miss Cramer, of the Grange, my very particular friend."

Mr. Leith bowed to Alice, and if he did not absolutely say the introduction was a pleasure, his eyes certainly expressed it. Letty was beginning to talk again; but at that juncture her father came out of the little vestry door and approached, and the young lady had to subside into silence.

Robert Leith settled himself down in Mr. Gray's old apartments, and speedily became at home in St. John's Dene. He was a gentleman, and he was a truly magnificent player on both organ and piano: two very good essentials to success in society. The parson and Mrs. Thorpe took a great fancy to him; they saw that he was, in every sense of the word, a good man, and he was well known to some relatives of theirs in London. It was from these relatives that Mr. Thorpe had heard of him. Miss Letty became nearly as intimate with him as a sister, and patronized him extensively. There was no other kind of love in her heart for him, and she made no scruple of saying so openly, to himself and to others; *he* was not the kind of man she could ever select for her true knight. Mr. Leith laughed, and said he hoped she would let him be as her brotherly knight, then and always; he would serve her with all a brother's fealty.

"Why do you call yourself a German?" she asked him one day.

"I never do call myself a German," he replied. "Other people, I believe, call me one sometimes."

"Why should they?"

"I am half German. My mother was German, and I have been a great deal in Germany."

"And your father was one of our clergymen, and had a great living, papa says."

"Yes," said Mr. Leith. "But my father and mother are both dead now, and I am alone."

"They died while you were at Oxford?"

"At Cambridge—not Oxford. My father wished me to go into the Church also: but I preferred music."

"Do you mean to say you are going to be a professional?—a real professional?—to get your living by music?" cried Letty, opening her eyes wide.

"I have a very little income at present, just what suffices to keep me in bread and cheese—truly it is little more that it does—and I am content to plod on patiently and work and wait and perfect myself, and perhaps in time I shall be one of our great composers, such as those great masters Mozart and Beethoven," replied the young man in simple candour.

"But why did you come down to St. John's Dene?" wondered Letty. "This place will not help you on to greatness."

"I came to St. John's Dene because I was ill. Ailing, that is," he added, correcting himself. "Some of my good friends thought London was too close for me, and that I was over studying besides. They chanced to hear that this place wanted an organist, and they said if I would only consent to come here for a time, the country air and the rest would set me up."

"But you study here. I have heard you say so."

"Oh yes. That I should do wherever I might be living. But I am already as much better as it is possible to be."

"So you don't intend to stay here! You only came for a time?"

"That is all."

"I am very sorry; and so I think will Alice be. You see we all like you very much already. It is such a change from old Gray. He was seventy at least, and took snuff."

Robert Leith laughed. It was not the first time he had heard himself favourably compared with Mr. Gray.

In return for the kindness shown him at the Parsonage, Mr. Leith asked to be allowed to superintend Letty's music. That young lady had no very particular genius for it; she was careless and impatient, and she never sat down to the piano without setting Mr. Leith's teeth on edge. A little good instruction and some steady practising would improve her greatly, as he represented to Mrs. Thorpe, and they gratefully thanked him, and accepted his offer.

"I wonder whether the young man would take Alice as well?" cried Mr. Cramer, one day that the clergyman was calling at Dene Grange. "Since Mrs. Bird left, Alice has missed her music lessons. He might charge me first-class terms for it."

"I have no doubt he would take her," said Mr. Thorpe. "But as to charging—I don't know that he would accept anything at all for it; he will not for Letty. He is not a music master, you know."

"Then that, of course, puts an end to the matter," returned proud Mr. Cramer. "I will have nobody teaching here who is above being paid for it."

The parson laughed to himself. He knew the old gentleman's failing. "I will ask him whether he will undertake Alice, and charge for it," he said aloud. "If he declines, there's no harm done."

Mr. Leith did not decline; he accepted it, a slight colour flushing his face as he did so. Not at the idea of being paid, but from the gratification of teaching that most charming girl.

"Mr. Cramer may pay me as much as he likes," he observed, with a laugh. "A guinea a lesson, if it pleases him."

"You will have to name the terms yourself: mind that, Leith. And the more you charge the better he will think of you."

"I *will* say a guinea a lesson, then."

So the lessons to Miss Cramer began; two a week. Generally speaking, Alice took them at the Parsonage; though sometimes Mr. Leith went to the Grange to give them. Mr. Cramer took rather a fancy to the young man in his condescending manner, finding him prudent, gentlemanly, and intelligent; and he occasionally invited him to dinner. Afterwards the young man would play for an hour or two on the magnificent grand piano, and Mr. Cramer would listen with a softened heart, and fancy that the old times were back again. His wife, of whom he had been very fond, was a delightful musician, and she used to play to him at these twilight hours.

In that summer the dream of Alice Cramer's life came to her. There are times in the lives of all when the one grand dream of love must arise; the sweetest, best dream of all the dreams we ever know in this world. And some of us wake to a beautiful reality, and some of us to a bitter sense of loss and disappointment.

Alice had never loved. She might have had her ideal, drawn out of poetry and romance, but she had never found it realized. When Robert Leith came, she felt as she had never felt before. Sometimes she wondered why it was that the old vague restlessness was gone from her. But she soon knew; she soon knew. The peace of love, that had come to still the longings and the restlessness of a heart which yearns for something it has never known, told her all.

And he loved her from the first. He saw in her a woman with a sweet and womanly soul, with a tender and trusting heart; and he felt that it would be safe for any man to give his happiness into

the keeping of such a girl as that. Alice would never betray the trust.

The summer days went by, and during their coming and their going these two learned the most beautiful lesson of life from the great and universal teacher we call Love.

One evening, when Mr. Leith called, he brought her a piece of music in manuscript.

He had been there also the previous evening, and found Alice alone, just as she was alone now. Mr. Cramer had one of his bad attacks, that caused him to keep his room. They had spent the evening at the piano, Mr. Leith dreamily playing, improvising, and Alice listening.

"What is this?" she said, as he put the sheet of music in her hand. "You have been composing."

"I composed it here last night, and wrote it out to-day. How is your papa?"

"Papa says he is no better, but I think he is. I hope he will be down to-morrow."

"Shall I play this over for you?"

"If you would!"

He began playing. It was a tender, passionate poem, full of melody; it seemed to Alice, as she listened, that one strain ran through it from beginning to end, and that strain was "I love you! I love you!" It seemed to repeat itself over and over in the slow, sweet measures of the melody. It seemed to her as if his soul, Robert Leith's soul, were speaking to her throughout.

"Do you like it?" he asked, as the last low chord died into silence.

"Yes, I like it," she timidly answered. "It is very beautiful," and her face was bright and her eyes were tender, though he could not see them under the drooping lids. "Would you mind playing it once more?"

And once more that most sweet and dreamy melody floated on the evening air. The piano was very near the glass doors of the open window, and the moonlight streamed in on the music: streamed upon the light hair and side face of the player, and upon Alice as she stood near him. The very situation had in itself enough of poetry and romance to awaken love.

And what of Mr. Cramer? What could that staid old gentleman be thinking of to allow these dangerous meetings? The probability was that Mr. Cramer, nursing himself upstairs and groaning over his ailments, knew nothing about Mr. Leith's being there. If he had known, he would have been perfectly easy. It would have seemed no more practicable to his haughty notions for a music master to presume to fall in love with Miss Cramer of Dene Grange, or for his daughter to fall in love with a music master, than for he, himself, to be made Pope of Rome to-morrow.

Again the last chord of the melody died away into silence. Alice, with a long-drawn breath, went a step nearer.

"What shall I call it?" he asked, turning his face to her in the moonlight. "It ought to be something appropriate to the hour. This evening hour, I mean, that we are now passing together."

Alice shook her head. "There is no name good enough for it," she thought.

"Shall we call it—'The Dream of the Moonbeams'?"

"Yes. Oh yes," she tremblingly whispered; for indeed the hour and its surroundings, and the love in her own heart, were telling upon her. "I have never listened to anything half so beautiful. Will you teach me to play it as you do?"

Robert Leith paused a moment and then rose. His love was telling upon him. He forgot prudence; he flung future troubles to the winds.

"Alice!" he said, as he took her hands in his, "Alice!" Her heart fluttered like a bird's. It told her what was coming.

"Alice, my darling, has the waltz whispered to you what I tried to make it whisper? Has it?" His voice was low and tender, and his face was illumined by that sweet, grave smile of his. "Did you understand it, Alice?"

"I think I did," she answered softly, and lifted her eyes shyly to his for a moment.

"And may I hope that—that you will not reject my love?" he cried in agitation. "Do you care for me, Alice?"

For answer she gave him a smile that told him what no words could have done, for this girl was no coquette: a glad, bright smile that was a reflection from the sunshine in her heart; and as such he understood it.

"God bless you, my darling," he murmured, tenderly kissing her.

Once again he played over the music at her request: a true melody of the moonbeams: and then they stood together and whispered of the future.

Ah, silly people! To suppose that Mr. Cramer would listen to anything so preposterous.

Robert Leith stood before Mr. Cramer the next day in his library: speaking a little of what he hoped to do, and of the fortune that must come to him sometime from his late father's brother. The old man sat dumbfounded.

"Am I to understand, sir," he said, his face pale with passion, "that you have the presumption, the impudence, to ask my consent to a marriage with my daughter?"

"I love your daughter, sir," Leith answered proudly, stung by the old man's words. "I do not wish to appear presumptuous or impudent when confessing it. My family is a good one; and——"

"And my answer is this," cried the old man, in a sudden burst of rage and anger. "If you don't leave my house immediately, I'll

have you put out of it! Do you hear, sir? put out of it by my servants. And if you ever dare to speak to Miss Cramer again, I'll horsewhip you, as I would a dog. Do you know what you are, man, in my eyes?—a fortune-hunter, an adventurer! Don't say a word"—as Leith attempted to speak—"I won't listen to you. Family!—future fortune! how dare you presume to speak of them in connection with Miss Cramer of Dene Grange? Leave my house; and take care that you never darken my door again."

Leith turned away with a white, set face, and left the room without a word.

He found Alice in the sitting-room, and entered it, greatly agitated.

"It is all over," he said. "Your father has ordered me out of the house, and called me a fortune-hunter, and threatened to horsewhip me if I ever speak to you again."

"Oh, Robert, Robert!" she cried, faint and sick, while his own face was pale with passion, for truly it did seem to him that he had been treated with cruel contumely. "And this is the end of it all! And I—I cared for you so."

"This is the end of it all, unless——" He stopped suddenly. "I have no right, perhaps, to ask you what I was about to do, in defiance of your father."

"What?" she gasped.

"To wait. That we should both wait patiently, hoping and praying for better times."

"Papa will never change his mind," she answered. "I know him too well for that. His will is the only law he knows. Oh, Robert, Robert!"

She leaned her head upon his shoulder, and wept bitterly. The dream had come to an end; and it had been so sweet a dream! He put his arms about her as if to keep her. Heaven alone knew how hard it was to let her go.

A footstep—and they were interrupted by the indignant father. His face was perfectly livid.

"Alice," he cried, hoarsely, "leave the room. I forbid you to speak to that man again. Do you hear? If you do, I will turn you from my door. Remember that. And you, sir! you!——"

Mr. Cramer fairly choked with passion, and could not go on.

"I am going, sir," answered Leith. "I was but taking my farewell of your daughter; for I have no intention of defying your mandate: from my earliest childhood I was taught to render implicit obedience to parents. God bless you, my darling," he added in a whisper to Alice as he passed her. "We may not meet again, but I shall never forget you."

Robert Leith went out from the house like one walking in a dream. He never looked at the angry man who stood at the room door with his threatening arm stretched out to point the way; he saw only the face of his lost love, white with pain and wet with tears.

And St. John's Dene got a most unexpected sensation. That same day it was made known that the new organist had resigned his post in the church, and was gone. Absolutely gone. Gone altogether away, bag and baggage. No reason was assigned by him in either of the two notes he sent; one to the clergyman, the other to the principal churchwarden, announcing his resignation and departure. But people had not been living with their eyes quite shut, and the cause was guessed at. St. John's Dene was in resentful despair. Where on earth were they to find another organist at a pinch?—and who would play for them next Sunday?

"This comes of engaging a young man who is not a professional!" grumbled the parson quaintly. "We had better have old Gray back again."

Alice Cramer could have told them all about it had she chosen. Her ruffled old father, entrenched in his pride and his selfishness and his wealth at Dene Grange, could also have told, and to better purpose. But never a word or a hint came from either. Just about this time Mrs. Bird came back; and poor Alice was seen abroad with her, as she used to be, her face sad now, but making no sign.

So Robert Karl Leith disappeared from the sight and knowledge of St. John's Dene. Other sensations arose by degrees for that stagnant place, and he was soon utterly forgotten. The new organist was a plodding man, with a wife and seven children and a bald head. His style was more flourishing than Mr. Gray's: but he had not the magic touch of Robert Leith, which had turned the simplest tune into a nameless melody.

The next great sensation which, in the course of a year or two, arose for St. John's Dene, was the death of the owner of Dene Grange. The Grange and all the rest of Mr. Cramer's property became his daughter's. Poor Alice was rich enough now and her own mistress: but she had never got over her life's disappointment, and her heart was sad. Mrs. Bird stayed on with her at the Grange; and at the end of a year, when the deepest of her mourning garments were put off, they went travelling.

The sunshine of a summer day lay over the German landscape. The languid tints of September had come before the August warmth had gone, and to day the hazy earth seemed to have lost its sharp clear outlines in a vague indefiniteness. The mountains, wrapped about in their warm purple atmosphere, were like something seen in dreams, half-forgotten, and yet real. The hills far away were only the ghosts of hills. The river, flowing swiftly through the valley, was the one thing in all the scene that seemed full of life and action.

Alice Cramer sat down upon a great rock, over which the fingers of fairies had woven a carpet of greenest moss, and looked away across the purple splendour of the afternoon, and thought. She had nothing to do but think now. She was alone in the world, free to

go and come as she pleased. Over the sea the grave was growing green in the churchyard nook where her father slept his last sleep.

The years that had come and gone since the man she had loved, and whom she had never forgotten—whom she never could forget—had kissed her and left her with a breaking heart, had brought some changes to her. She had grown more womanly; there were traces of the refining work of sorrow in her face. But it was a pure and beautiful face still.

In all these years she had heard but once of Robert Leith. Chancing to open a newspaper which especially noted the doings of the art world, both of music and painting, she saw his name—Karl Leith. It was how it appeared there. The paragraph stated that he had gone abroad to study. That was all. Since then he seemed, as before, to have dropped out of her world, leaving no trace behind him.

This afternoon, as Alice sat in the quiet of the summer-autumn day, she fell to thinking of him. No very unusual thing. She wondered if their paths would ever meet again. If he only knew that nothing kept them apart now, unless some cruel fate was interposing, would he come to her? In the last days of her father's life the old man's proud spirit left him; and he told Alice that if the time could come over again he might not oppose her. So there was no impediment now. And then the thought came to her, dwelling on these past things, that perhaps Robert had forgotten her. But he had told her at the last that he never would forget her, and she believed he could not. She judged him by herself, you see.

The quaint German village below her grew dim as the sun dropped out of sight behind the mountains. She fancied that the valley, full of a cool, purplish-gray mist, now that the sunset had come, was a sea; that the village, growing more and more indistinct, was being swallowed in this ideal sea; and then she laughed at herself for such fancies.

The clatter of wheels down the rocky road caused Alice to lift her head. She saw, faintly enough in the evening light, the red jacket of the postillion, as he cracked his whip and drew up before the door of the inn.

"Some travellers," she said, rising and wrapping her light shawl about her. "Probably English; I will go down and get a look at them. It will be quite a new sensation here—as we used to say at St. John's Dene." It was a somewhat inaccessible spot, this little remote German village, and could only be reached by post-travelling, or on foot. Not half a dozen strangers were in it now, including Alice and Mrs. Bird.

Alice picked her way down the rocks in the twilight, and sat down in the moonlight, in the garden attached to the inn. The salon looked empty, so far as she could see it through the open windows. Mrs. Bird and the rest, she supposed, were all down at the little well, not yet dignified with the name of Spa. Alice sat on, and

waited for them to return. Of the recently-arrived travellers she saw nothing.

Suddenly, and very quietly, somebody touched the piano. It stood against the wall in the salon, and Alice had not seen it opened since her sojourn at the place.

There was something in the music and the moonlight, taken in conjunction, that held her like a spell. She could not see the player, for the room was full of shadows, but he seemed to be playing with his whole soul.

Suddenly the strain changed. Alice's heart gave a great leap, and then stood still. That melody! Could she ever forget it? Ah, no! It was the one she had retained in her heart; the same beautiful story she had listened to years ago, that memorable night at Dene Grange when Robert Leith declared his love, "The Dream of the Moonbeams." Now there was an undertone of passionate sadness and sorrow running through it, that told of a longing pain which would not be quieted. It was as if the player would repeat to himself the story of his love, while his heart was moaning for it.

The melody died away in a wailing minor chord, and then silence reigned. Alice crept to the open glass doors and peeped in. Some one sat at the piano still; who it was she could not at first see, for the salon was only lighted by the moon. Not just at the very first.

"Robert?" she said, hesitatingly, as she paused upon the threshold: and the man turned his head quickly, and then she saw. "Oh, Robert, Robert!"

He sprang up; he saw her standing there, her face white and radiant in the moonlight. An unutterable gladness sat on her face, just as though the soul shone through it.

"Alice! My Alice!" was all he said, with a low, quiet cry. And he took her into his arms; and they both broke down, almost sobbing. The moon's rays fell about them, white and pure, like the benediction of God.

Is there any need to tell more? How St. John's Dene once more got the "new organist" back again, to its own intense astonishment. But he was a man of consequence now, rich and influential, and gave them beautiful parties at the Grange, and very often took the organ for them on Sundays, delighting the old church with his wonderful touch.

But his wife declares that, but for his playing that particular piece that evening at the inn in Germany, they might never have met again, for he was intending to depart on the following morning. And often on a moonlit night she stands by him, her head on his shoulder, while he softly plays "The Dream of the Moonbeams."

E. E. R.

A LOST LETTER.

WHEN I was a young girl I lived in one of the cleanest, quietest, dullest little country towns in England. It was inland and far from a railway. We were quite below the notice of the most enthusiastic Archæological Society. We had no ruins. Even our church was a hideous brick structure of William the Third's days. Our nearest market-town was six miles away; sometimes our inhabitants went over there to the annual fair, and this was our most exciting jaunt.

To begin with, we had no young men—*they* very soon emigrated from Westford. Then we were very strict and exclusive regarding "sets," and as the town did not number many inhabitants, it was difficult to find many people quite in one's own set, and consequently fit to visit. I really think the small tradesmen had the best of it. As Bunyan remarks, "He that is low need fear no fall." They had no reason to be exclusive, and consequently exchanged tea-drinkings freely and cheerfully, and made up sociable parties to drive over to the market-town in fair-time. But these vulgar pleasures were of course forbidden to the "upper ten" of the town—our circle was select, doubtless, but very limited.

It was my privilege to belong to the aristocratic section of the community. When both my parents died in India, leaving me nothing but a small pension, my good old aunt at Westford was the only one who offered to receive me. Dear Aunt Jane! her heart was as large as her means were small, and she welcomed me to her neat little home as willingly as if I had been an heiress.

Aunt Jane (my mother's sister) was the spinster daughter of a long-deceased curate of the parish; she lived in a small detached house out of the main street; and was entitled to visit among the highest rank of the town. This first circle comprised the rector, an old man of seventy, a martyr to gout, just able to get across to the church on Sundays, and preach the prosiest sermons ever inflicted on a patient congregation. Next came Mr. Cayford, the curate, a really excellent man, who did all the work of the parish, but who was no addition to the liveliness of the neighbourhood. He was thirty-eight, tall, thin, sandy-haired, short-sighted, a bachelor, and terribly afraid of being entrapped into matrimony against his will.

"Sleepy Hollow" I used to call Westford when I was a pert girl, rather to dear Aunt Jane's annoyance. She loved the town where all her quiet life had been passed. But I cannot complain that my life has been a dull one, ever since the day when a certain young subaltern thought he would pay a visit to the daughter of his kind

old friend whom he had known some years before in her Indian home.

Harry and I had been playmates as children, and when his regiment was quartered at a place ten miles from Westford, it occurred to him to ride over one day and call on Aunt Jane.

Time must have hung heavy on his hands, I suspect; anyhow, he came, and called rather frequently after that; and it ended in his taking me away from Westford altogether. Since then we have travelled pretty well over the world, and I liked our roving life. But then, if Harry had lived at Westford, I might have looked back even to that dull town with affection.

A celebrated doctor may die in London and be hardly missed, even by his patients: but when Dr. Channer, who had attended all the births and death-beds in Westford for half a century, died himself at last, great was the stir in the parish. We all regretted the good old man, but our regret was mingled with anxious curiosity as to who should succeed him. Dr. Channer had been a privileged member of our "first set;" would his successor be a man we could admit to an equal honour? This "first set" only comprised the Rector and Mr. Cayford, Dr. Channer, Captain Ford, a retired naval officer with an invalid wife, a houseful of children, and a minute income; Mr. Simmonds, the solicitor, and a sprinkling of old maids and widows. Our doctor's loss was therefore really a serious one.

About six weeks after Dr. Channer's funeral, Westford was startled by seeing his old house undergoing a vigorous course of painting, papering, and whitewashing. Vans of furniture began to arrive, and the town were informed that a Dr. Mills had come to arrangements with Dr. Channer's executors, and had taken house, garden, and patients at a valuation. Curiosity was now on tiptoe.

Dr. Mills proved quite unlike our old medical practitioner. He was a tall, florid, well-made man, about fifty, with a jovial manner and a loud voice. Old Dr. Channer had been a thin old man, with melancholy tones, as though he had just come from a death-bed. If you were ill and sent for him, he always came in looking as though he expected to find you "in extremis." Now, Dr. Mills would bustle up, and assure you that "he'd soon have you about again," in tones of cheerful confidence.

At first we were a little doubtful about him. Old Mrs. Hammond, one of the chiefest of our "upper ten," pronounced him wanting in refinement—too boisterous. Now, Mrs. Hammond was the widow of a younger son of one of the county families; and once or twice in the year her husband's relations sent her game or fruit from their estate, thus acknowledging the connection with her; so, though she herself was poor, and lived in a small house with one maid, she took rank among us as "one of the Hammonds of C——," and was a great personage in Westford. If she had continued to pronounce

against Dr. Mills it would have been serious; but, luckily for him, he succeeded in curing her of an obstinate neuralgia which had baffled Dr. Channer's skill. And after this she allowed that he was "a clever man in his profession, a trifle abrupt in manner—but then Abernethy was equally so."

He certainly understood his business, and was an agreeable man to boot. I never quite cared about him myself; I cannot account for the feeling, but somehow he never looked altogether a man one would trust, in spite of his very open, candid manner. Perhaps it was *too* open—but I cannot give any reason for my feeling. Nothing is more difficult to analyse than these instinctive likes and dislikes.

I had no possible reason to think anything but good of Dr. Mills, yet I did not care for him. He was soon liked well enough in Westford, and with good reason: he infused a little life into the general stagnation. As Mrs. Hammond truly said, he himself was a boisterous man; his voice was loud, his boots creaked, he was big, and took up a good deal of room. Not good qualifications for a doctor, you will say. But he could be quiet in a sick-room, and then he was really very skilful—far in advance of his predecessor. His cheerfulness was a tonic to his patients; and he had such a flow of conversation and could tell such droll stories, that a visit from him was a blessing to beguile the tediousness of convalescence.

In three months' time Dr. Mills was the most popular man in the town; the poor praised his kindness, the better-off his skill; all were grateful for the life he infused into the place.

In a town like Westford, so rich in spinsters, so sparingly supplied with marriageable bachelors, a man like Dr. Mills soon became the subject of many speculations and surmises.

Of course he meant to marry—what could he want with that roomy old house if he meant to inhabit it in solitude all his days? Besides, he had lately been adding a few trifles to the drawing-room, and building out a conservatory over the staircase. But on whom would his choice fall? Which of the Westford spinsters would secure the prize? As yet, the most acute observer could not detect any definite attentions to one lady in particular. Dr. Mills was so attentive, so debonair to the whole female sex, that it was hard to say which of the eligible maidens or widows would win him. Of course there was a good deal of quiet "setting of caps" at him, and a good deal of contempt expressed by each lady at this conduct on the part of her neighbours.

We all settled that so sensible a man would select a partner of his own age; and many were the secret hopes of the ladies who had passed early youth, but were still by no means unwilling to become brides.

The belle of our town—the dullest place must have its belle—was, of course, out of the reckoning. Ida Martin, beautiful and sweet as she was, being only nineteen, could not be thought of as a fit wife

for the doctor. I omitted to mention her in my list of our "upper ten thousand," though she belonged to that aristocratic section of the community. She resided with her grandmother, a blind old lady, widow of a London barrister, who had settled at Westford, partly for economy, partly because her early youth had been spent in the neighbourhood. Ida had a dull enough life with her aged relative, but she had occasional breaks to its monotony in the shape of visits to London to stay with a certain godmother, who petted her, and took her about, and would gladly have kept her altogether could the old lady have spared her. It was not wonderful that anyone should pet Ida; she was one of those bright, pretty, loving creatures who seem born to be caressed and admired. Had she been older, or the doctor younger, everyone would have predicted that she was the destined Mrs. Mills.

At the time my story commences Ida's godmother died, leaving her—"a fortune" the town gossips said—I believe, about £3,000. This was speedily magnified; and all, except her most intimate friends, spoke of her as a great heiress. I mention this, as it has a bearing on my story.

One fine winter's day I set out on one of the most detested duties of my life, a round of morning visits. But we were very martinets in social intercourse, and to neglect returning a call punctually was a serious crime; but Aunt Jane was confined to the house by a bad cold and it was imperative that I should take her place and pay our social debts.

So, rather grumblingly I fear, I dressed in my Sunday best, and set forth, card-case in hand, with an earnest hope that I should be lucky enough to find everyone out. Aunt Jane had started me so early, that I was afraid I should hardly give people time to get out after digesting their early dinners: so, to allow them every opportunity of escaping for an afternoon walk, I turned my steps first to Miss Virginia Craven's.

I did not owe a visit here, but I liked Miss Virginia; as indeed everyone must have done. She was a gentle, quiet, little old maid, who had passed her whole life in a state of abject subjection to a crusty old father and strong-minded elder sister. From early childhood these two had scolded and snubbed and generally repressed her. She was the gentlest and most unselfish of human beings, and never resented this even in thought. On the contrary, her father and "dear sister Maria" were her ideals of human excellence and goodness. When they died, the latter only a few years before my tale commences, Miss Virginia was inconsolable. Both had probably loved her after their fashion, but they had bad tempers, and Miss Virginia's meekness was too tempting.

"I don't know how I shall get on without Maria," sobbed the poor little lady, when "Maria's" sharp tongue was silenced for ever. "She always said I was too foolish to be allowed to act for myself. She

even ordered my caps for me, because she could not trust me to make a fright of myself."

I had been irreverent enough to think that Miss Virginia would have been rather of the mind of the man who engraved on his wife's tomb, "She is at rest, *and so am I.*" But such an idea never crossed the gentle lady's brain. Perhaps one misses even grumbling and scolding, if it has gone on for over fifty years; anyhow, Miss Virginia was a sincere mourner for her cankered sister.

Contrary to everyone's expectation, she did not take advantage of her new-acquired freedom. If the living Maria had ruled her despotically, the memory of the defunct was even more tyrannical. Sometimes, in her sister's life-time, Miss Virginia had faintly attempted to withstand certain arrangements in the household; now "dear Maria's plans" were sacred. Miss Virginia was chilly and rheumatic, but no parlour fires were permitted till November, be the autumn never so damp and cold. "Dear Maria so disliked my asking for fires earlier; she had no patience with people being cold," sighed Miss Virginia, as she wrapped herself in a shawl and sat shivering in loyal obedience to the wishes of the defunct Miss Maria.

Purchasing her garments cost her great searchings of heart; it is difficult to say what the taste of a departed relative would be in such matters; and Miss Virginia never bought even a new cap without long and anxious deliberation as to whether Maria would have approved it. The only thing she exercised her free-will in was in the far larger share of her little income that she bestowed in charity. Miss Maria had been a hard woman, impatient of poverty and trouble in others. Miss Virginia had the tenderest heart in the world; she would have given away the teeth out of her head, as her sister used to say in wrath; and in this case alone her heart was too much for her reverence for the deceased Maria's memory.

"I am afraid Maria would have blamed me—I am half afraid this would have displeased her," would Miss Virginia murmur to herself as she relieved some destitute object; but despite the self-accusing thought, the relief was bestowed. Perhaps she was sometimes imposed upon; but I know she was often a means of assisting real distress. I dare hardly whisper, in these days of repression of mendicity, that I think it is a lesser evil to relieve a few undeserving persons, than to neglect cases of actual need—I know some great societies think very differently.

It is needless to say Miss Virginia was not a clever woman, she had been too long repressed and kept under for that, but she was a thoroughly good one—gentle, loving, unselfish. Many a beauty, many a genius, might have envied the large heart, the tender sympathies of that much-faded little old maid. Absurd as her devotion to that crusty sister's memory was in one sense, it had its touching side, in the affection that clung to the companion of her childhood, in the humility that exalted another's plans above her own.

So when I entered on this winter's day, and found Miss Virginia with as bad a cold as Aunt Jane, sitting at a respectful distance from the fire, just as Miss Maria had always made her do, I rather admired her, though I felt how absurd she was.

"No, my dear," she said, in reply to my suggestion that she should take an arm-chair on the hearth-rug; "you know how extremely averse dear Maria always was to my hanging over the fire. She always objected to see me seat myself too near it."

I knew it was vain to combat the shade of Maria, so said no more.

We chatted a while, but it struck me that my old friend was in rather a nervous state. What could have happened to trouble the serenity of her existence? She had almost a guilty look—seemed fidgety and anxious. I began to suspect that some specially distressing case had come to her knowledge, that she had given more largely than Maria would have approved, and was now suffering remorse of conscience.

Winter days are short, and I began to be afraid that if I delayed too long my friends would have time to take a walk and be at home again to receive me, so I rose to take my leave. Then Miss Virginia's agitation increased.

"My dear Mary," she said, blushing and hesitating, "you must pass the post-office; would you—could you—is it troubling you to ask you to post this?" and she handed me a letter carefully sealed.

"Trouble? not the least," I answered, carelessly, thinking Miss Virginia had given *gold* somewhere, to be in such a nervous state. So I took the letter, and put it into my pocket.

And now I must go back a little, and enlighten the reader as to the cause of Miss Virginia's agitation. I heard all the story some years later.

The day before, she had been sitting tranquilly at work, when the post brought her a letter. This alone was a surprise, for she had no friend outside Westford, and Westford was not large enough for it to be worth while posting letters to each other. Neat little maid-servants carried all the invitations to tea-drinkings, &c., and the answer to these hospitable missives. Like many other people, Miss Virginia turned the letter round and round, and looked at the seal, and did everything but enlighten herself by opening it, as she wondered who it came from. Why, surely it was Dr. Mills's writing! Yes, the post-mark was London, and he had gone there for a few days, she knew. Could he have heard she was unwell, and had he written in kindness of heart to prescribe for her, gratis? He was on very friendly terms with Miss Virginia, as with all the town. She opened the letter; yes, it was signed "William Mills," but it contained no prescription.

I doubt if a bombshell exploding in the roof could have caused a greater shock to poor Miss Virginia than that innocent-looking letter.

She read it, stared helplessly at it, rubbed her spectacles to see the writing better, and then dropped it with an expression of utter confusion and perplexity. It was no other than *a proposal of marriage!*

Strange as it may seem, there was no doubt about it. The letter was duly addressed to "Miss Virginia Craven, Laburnum Cottage, Westford," and she knew the doctor's handwriting well enough. "My very dear lady," began the epistle, and it went on to a straightforward, downright offer of marriage. "I trust the slight disparity of our ages will not influence your decision; a few years on the husband's side is surely no drawback," concluded the writer.

Now Miss Virginia was probably a good six years older than the doctor—but this allusion did not displease her. In fact, after the first shock of amazement was over, she began to reflect seriously on the matter. To receive one's first proposal at fifty-one is certainly a little upsetting at first. The idea of becoming Mrs. Mills, or Mrs. anyone, in fact, had never entered Miss Virginia's brain.

Once, many years ago, there had been an idea that the assistant of old Dr. Channer had cast eyes of admiration at the younger Miss Craven, but this passing fancy was so sternly repressed by the vigilant Miss Maria that it never took the form of a definite proposal. "I wonder what Maria would think I ought to do," sighed Miss Virginia in her perplexity, but it was impossible to answer this question. She remembered her sister had been very indignant at the aforesaid episode of Dr. Channer's assistant; Miss Virginia still recollected the stern "Virginia, you are a fool—a conceited fool, who fancies everyone who looks at her is in love with her."

"But I was so young then," reasoned Miss Virginia, "and Mr. Gray was very poor—perhaps Maria would consider this a different case. But she would never have dreamt of Dr. Mills proposing to *me*. I never noticed anything particular in his attentions, yet he says I have been his admiration ever since he set foot in Westford, and he speaks of my beauty—oh dear!" And a blush crossed the old lady's withered cheek.

As no amount of puzzling would enlighten her regarding what the departed Maria's views would have been on the subject, Miss Virginia began to consider what her own were.

Certainly Dr. Mills was a very delightful man; certainly it would be very agreeable to be mistress of that nicely-furnished house. Her own income was a very minute one, barely sufficient to enable her to live on in the old house she had known so long. Dr. Mills was reputed rich, and evidently had plenty of money at command. His wife would be a person of importance in Westford society. Gentle and humble-minded as Miss Virginia was, she could not repress a slight feeling of pride at being thus selected to fill the post of honour which all the other single ladies were secretly aspiring to.

She rose and looked at herself in the glass. Well, perhaps she looked younger than she really was; anyway, Dr. Mills seemed to consider

her his junior. So, to make a long story short, Miss Virginia sat cogitating all the evening, slept on the matter, and at last wrote a modest acceptance of the doctor's suit.

Then came the difficulty—how to convey the precious missive to the post. Molly, the little handmaiden of sixteen, who constituted Miss Virginia's whole domestic establishment, was a sharp girl. She had already perceived that something unusual had taken place. Miss Virginia had come down late to breakfast, forgotten to give the cat her saucer of milk, let the urn overflow on the carpet, and after the breakfast things had been removed, instead of settling peaceably to her wonted knitting, had taken out her rarely-used desk, and was sitting writing, destroying half-finished letters, then commencing fresh epistles.

Molly was on the tiptoe of anxiety to know what all this meant—she made a dozen excuses for interrupting her mistress at her task, and each time made the most frantic efforts to catch a glimpse of what she was writing.

"That girl suspects something," thought poor Miss Virginia, her guilty consciousness sharpening her faculties. "Dear, dear, if I send her to the post with the letter, she is so sharp, she will guess everything, and the whole story will be over Westford before to-night. Dr. Mills will like to tell his own news, I am sure," and a bright flush dyed her cheek, as she thought with gentle complacency of the astonishment this "news" would be to her little world. After being so thoroughly nobody for so many years, she may be pardoned this little touch of vanity.

So it came to pass that when I appeared, Miss Virginia trusted me with the precious document, as before recorded.

I had not long departed, when a second visitor appeared—pretty Ida Martin.

"I am come full of apologies, Miss Virginia," she said, entering. "See—a letter for you I have actually been rude enough to open. It was addressed to me, so that pleads my excuse. But you ought to have had it before now, only it arrived while I was in London, yesterday. I only came back an hour ago, and found this awaiting me. I ran round with it at once, so as to give you time to answer it by post time to-day." And she held out a letter, in Dr. Mills's writing, addressed outside to "Miss Ida Martin," but commencing "Dear Miss Virginia."

A horrible doubt, a feeling that some dreadful mistake had taken place, rushed on Miss Virginia. She hastily glanced over the letter.

It was very short; merely a civil request for a receipt for a particular cake Miss Virginia was famous for, and which a sister of the doctor's was anxious to try. But in a postscript were the words, "I know all my kind Westford friends think it is time I brought a mistress to the old red-brick house—well, if fortune smiles on me, I may do so ere long. I hope to have news for the town when I return."

Poor Miss Virginia!—the room swam before her eyes. Evidently, yes, evidently, her prospects were "castles in the air." Not for her was that fatal proposal intended. It was plain the doctor had put his letters into the wrong envelopes. And she had been foolish enough to think those flattering lines were addressed to herself—and to answer them! Oh, the shame of the whole proceeding!—could she ever show her face in Westford again?

Ida's alarmed voice recalled her to herself.

"Dear Miss Virginia, you look so ill—what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing—only my bad cold," said the unhappy Miss Virginia, rallying herself with an heroic effort. "I think, my dear, there has been some mistake about these letters, for, do you know, I have one here evidently meant for you."

Miss Virginia brought out the concluding sentence resolutely, resolved to veil her own folly as long as might be.

She handed Ida the epistle; the girl ran her eyes over it hastily, and then burst into a ringing laugh.

"Oh, Miss Virginia, did you read this absurd letter? an old fellow like that, whom I have not spoken to a dozen times! 'Slight difference in years,' why, he might be my grandfather! and to begin, 'Dear lady,' in that stilted style!—well, I did give Dr. Mills credit for possessing more common sense."

A pause ensued—of amused surprise on the part of Ida, of speechless shame on the part of Miss Virginia.

"How you must have wondered who the letter was for," said Ida, laughing again. "Miss Virginia, if I had not called round, would you have thought of forwarding it to me?"

Miss Virginia winced under the words. Was it not evident that no one would have imagined the letter was intended for her? and yet she, in her unutterable folly and vanity, had dared to imagine it. If Maria could have known all this!

"I suppose I ought to answer this absurd effusion," said Ida, breaking in on the poor lady's bitter self-reproaches, "especially as I am a day late already. There is your desk open invitingly—may I scribble a few lines now?" and at Miss Virginia's faint assent she took her seat and wrote.

"I have been very civil, of course," she said, laughing still as she folded her letter, "though it is really too absurd. Nearly a stranger to me, and such an old fellow. But, of course, Miss Virginia, we must keep this to ourselves. Unless," she added slyly, "*you* will keep the letter, and take pity on him yourself."

Alas! how little did Ida think her jesting words were but too true!

"I am in time for the post to-day," Ida went on.

"In time for the post." Miss Virginia shuddered. Unlucky Dr. Mills! It is not the fate of every man to receive, by the same post, a refusal from a lady to whom he has proposed, and an acceptance from one to whom he has offered no such honour.

However, repentance was out of the question, and Miss Virginia saw her visitor depart cheerfully, letter in hand.

Then did the gentle old lady sit down to bewail herself. To a person of Miss Virginia's modest nature the case was really a terrible one. How could she ever face Dr. Mills again? Would he not think her the vainest, most foolish old woman that ever existed? If Miss Virginia had felt younger than her actual fifty-one years in the first flush of surprise at that fatal letter, she now felt immeasurably older. She looked in the glass: never had her cap appeared so dowdy, her appearance so miserable.

"At my age to have imagined such a thing possible!" sighed the poor lady. "Oh, Maria was right—I am not fit to take care of myself." And she sighed and fretted, till her head ached, and she felt perfectly ill.

In this state I found her late in the afternoon, having looked in on my return from my walk, to bring her a pot of Aunt Jane's famous black-currant jelly, a panacea for sore throats and colds.

Miss Virginia thanked me kindly, but sadly—jelly could not sweeten such trouble as hers.

"Mary, my dear," said the old lady, nervously, as I rose to take my leave, "I gave you a letter."

A guilty flush rose to my cheek. I hastily felt in my pocket, and there was the letter still! Of course I had forgotten all about it, as amateur letter-carriers usually do.

"Oh, Miss Virginia, I am so *dreadfully* sorry," I exclaimed, producing the unlucky document. "What can I do?—the post is gone."

But my contrite apologies were cut short by Miss Virginia taking—I had almost written *snatching*—the letter from my hand, with an absolutely radiant countenance.

"It does not matter, my dear," she said, hastily, with an expression between laughing and crying; "the letter was of no consequence; that is, I mean, I wish to alter something in it—don't worry."

"Poor dear Miss Virginia," I thought, as I wended my way home, "she really is becoming very incoherent and eccentric."

I might have thought her more eccentric if I had seen her at that moment. Burning letters is generally considered a melancholy occupation; pretty, mournful pictures and poems have been painted and written on the subject; but nothing save happiness was visible on Miss Virginia's face as she pushed the letter into the hottest part of the fire, and held it with the poker till the last atom was consumed. Then she drew a long breath like one delivered from some terrible apprehension, and settled to her knitting in her wonted tranquil fashion. Molly, bringing in tea, opined that "missus looked like herself again."

In fact, the relief at the unlooked-for recovery of her letter had fairly blotted out any lingering disappointment at finding she was not to become Mrs. Mills, after all.

Enough that she might pursue her quiet tenor of life, blameless and respected, without such a terrible scandal transpiring as that she, at fifty-one years old, had accepted a man who had never proposed to her.

"I really think I should have died of the disgrace, if such a thing had got known over Westford," thought the poor lady, with a shudder.

It was three years or more before I heard the story I have now narrated. Harry and I had been married, and left Westford, and had come back for a week's visit to show Aunt Jane a baby—*the* baby of the creation—and to say good-bye before we sailed for India.

Of course the baby was an attraction to Miss Virginia, who had a passionate love of children; and she spent half her days at Aunt Jane's, "worshipping the child," as auntie's old servant (no baby-fancier) phrased it.

And one wet afternoon, when the idol had been cutting a tooth, and at last consented to doze in Miss Virginia's lap, she and I, waxing confidential, as women do over cradles, began to talk of old days together.

Laughing at the recollection of sundry acts of girlish carelessness, I learnt how *one* of my forgetful deeds had saved Miss Virginia much trouble. Even now her voice faltered and her cheek blushed as she told the story.

"It would have been such a disgrace you know, Mary, my dear," she repeated; "and, besides that, I had really a merciful escape altogether. Dr. Mills seems to have been quite a deception. I don't want to speak unkindly, but I am really afraid that he was not sincere in all he did here.

"After Ida refused him he proposed to Mrs. Crump—you remember Mrs. Crump, the rich farmer's widow—and, of course, she was only too proud to accept him. Everyone thought it was a sad marrying below his own rank, for you know Mrs. Crump was never in good circles in Westford; in fact, we were all quite vexed about it. I thought that perhaps he was really attached to Ida, and married in haste just because he was unhappy—people do that sometimes, you know. But I am afraid he only thought of money.

"Mrs. Crump—Mrs. Mills then—did not like Westford, so they left soon after their marriage, and went to London.

"There was some talk about bills left behind, and I know Mr. Bullen, the new doctor, who bought the practice and the house, grumbled a good deal, and said he had been deceived, but I don't know in what way. Mr. Simmonds, the lawyer here, wrote a great many letters to Dr. Mills, and Mrs. Jones, of the post-office, spoke of it, and I know Mr. Bullen was always calling at Mr. Simmonds'.

"At last letters came back both to Mr. Bullen and Mr. Simmonds, addressed by them to Dr. Mills, and marked, 'Gone away, no

address left;' we heard about it from Patty, Mr. Bullen's servant, who found the empty envelopes in the fire-place. No one knew anything more till two months ago. And then—what do you think? —poor Mrs. Crump, that was, came back to Westford.

"Poor thing! it was *she* who made the bad marriage; for Dr. Mills behaved very ill to her. It seems he was a clever doctor, but had been obliged to leave London because of some scandal; I don't exactly know what, but it was something disgraceful, and, clever as he was, he lost all his practice there. So he came to a quiet place where he was not known; and I am afraid he just married because he wanted money.

"He was dreadfully in debt when he married Mrs. Crump, and after they went to London he did nothing—only spent her money. She had never thought about settlements, so he had control of everything. And he treated her so ill, and drank, and altogether—I could not tell you what that poor woman went through.

"Things got so bad at last, that she threatened to apply for a divorce, and then he agreed to let her go if she paid him a certain sum a year. So, to avoid all the scandal of getting into the papers, she agreed to this—very foolishly Mr. Simmonds says—but Dr. Mills made her sign some papers, and she must pay the money now.

"Between this and all the sums he ran through in London, she is left quite poorly off, and has come back here to live because it is cheap. We are all sorry for her. We thought her presumptuous in marrying Dr. Mills, and some people said that she dressed quite out of her station, wearing satin and lace, which none of the first ladies in Westford could afford, and she only a farmer's widow; but no one thinks of that now.

"So, if Dr. Mills had really asked me to marry him, it would have been a sad calamity, for I might" (why, she actually *had*) "have accepted him, and should have been a miserable woman all my life after.

"You are happy, my dear," and Miss Virginia kissed the sleeping child on her knee; "but marriage is a great lottery. Poor Maria always said that if a woman married, she gave a proof that she was a fool; and I really think the government must agree with her, for it seems when a woman is once married she can do so little in managing her own affairs. Poor Mrs. Mills says the lawyers tell her she cannot even make a will now—it seems hard."

And here Miss Virginia kissed the baby again, perhaps to hide the tears in her eyes; whilst I was silent, feeling thankful that, after all, my forgetfulness had brought trouble upon no one, but the contrary. Wondering, too, it may be, why so often the best women are left behind in the race for Matrimony.

REST.

"There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God."

GOD gave to man the earth all fair and glowing,
Rich with sweet flowers and fruits, and lofty trees,
And grassy vales, their pleasant shades bestowing,
And thymy downs to greet the summer breeze.

God gave to man the sky all star-bespangled,
HIS diamond footprints on the purple height,
Changeless in beauty, through their maze entangled,
To guide the way-worn wanderer aright.

God gave to man his nature's noble presence,
His stately form and heaven-directed soul,
His comprehensive mind and deathless essence,
And bade all things acknowledge his control.

God gave to man his home's unbought affection,
Where eyes of love his answering glance may meet;
Blest in fruition of his heart's selection,
Gladly he homeward turns his weary feet.

God upon man all kindly gifts hath lavished,
Save *one*, the dearly sought for and the best,
With fairest sights and sounds each sense hath ravished,
Yet here in vain may man demand for *rest*.

He finds it not in shady glades reposing,
He finds it not the starry heavens among,
Nor even when, his home around him closing,
He lists at sunset to his children's song.

God keeps back rest alone, that the world-weary,
E'en though his cup high mantles to the brim,
Or though his fate be desolate and dreary,
May seek and find repose alone in HIM!

M. I. P.

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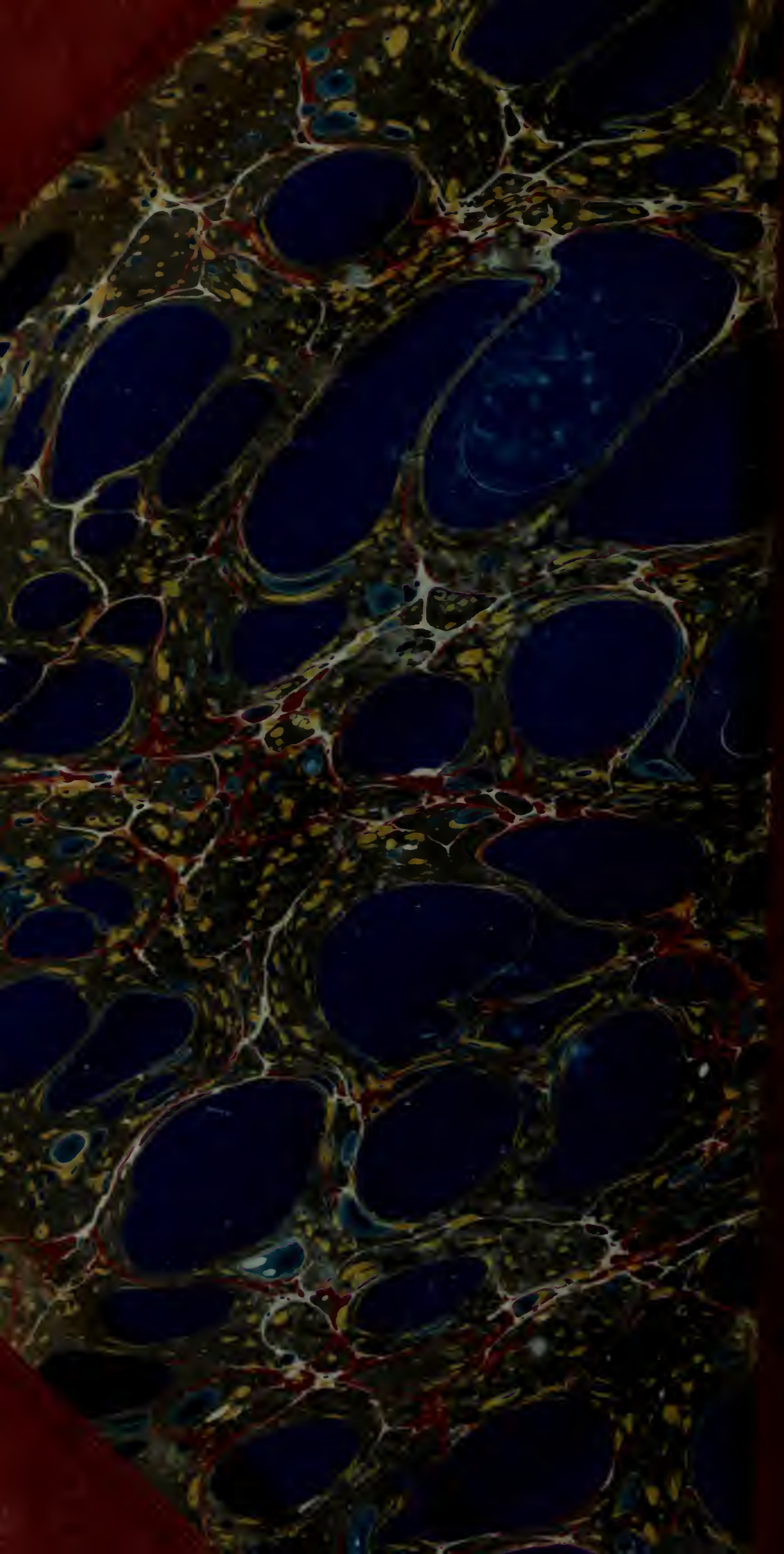
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